DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 421 204 PS 026 277

TITLE	Alaska Foster Parent Handbook.
INSTITUTION	Alaska State Dept. of Health and Social Services, Juneau. Div. of Family and Youth Services.
PUB DATE	1998-01-00
NOTE	71p.; Written by the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center. For 1989 edition, see ED 317 263.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Certification; Child Health; Child Welfare; Financial Support; *Foster Care; *Foster Family; Legal Responsibility; Parent Materials; *Parenting Skills; *State Programs
IDENTIFIERS	Alaska; Family of Origin

ABSTRACT

This handbook from the Division of Family and Youth Services in Alaska outlines the policies and guidelines of the division regarding foster care and offers support to foster parents in their journey as a foster family. The handbook's chapters are: (1) "Introduction to Foster Parenting"; (2) "When a Child Arrives, When a Child Leaves"; (3) "Daily Living"; (4) "Emergencies and Changes in Your Home"; (5) "Financial Matters"; (6) "Medical Care"; (7) "Health and Safety"; (8) "Positive Parenting"; (9) "A Child's Birth Family/Relative Foster Care"; (10) "Licensing"; (11) "Specializations"; (12) "Case Planning/Legal Considerations"; and (13) "Foster Care Resources." Includes a glossary of terms. (EV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PS

ED 421 204

PS 026277

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Jean Henry
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Alaska Foster Parent Handbook

Division of Family and Youth Services
Department of Health and Social Services
State of Alaska

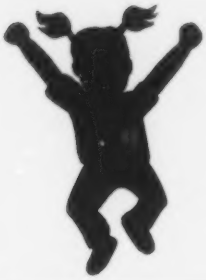
Written By The Alaska Foster Parent Training Center
January, 1998

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. *Introduction to Foster Parenting ... 1*
2. *When A Child Arrives, When A Child Leaves... 5*
3. *Daily Living ... 10*
4. *Emergencies and Changes in Your Home... 17*
5. *Financial Matters ... 21*
6. *Medical Care... 29*
7. *Health and Safety... 32*
8. *Positive Parenting... 36*
9. *A Child's Birth Family/Relative Foster Care ... 40*
10. *Licensing... 45*
11. *Specializations... 51*
12. *Case Planning/Legal Considerations...55*
13. *Foster Care Resources... 61*

Glossary... 65

Index... 67



1. Introduction to Foster Parenting

Welcome To Foster Parenting! ☆ *Your Role As A Foster Parent* ☆ *Planning With Your Family* ☆ *The Children Who Come Into Foster Care* ☆ ***The Division Of Family And Youth Services*** ☆ *Family Services* ☆ *Youth Corrections* ☆ *Community Care Licensing* ☆ *Rural And Urban Differences*☆ *Private Child Placement Agencies And Tribes* ☆ *References To Other Materials*

Welcome To Foster Parenting!

Welcome to being a foster parent for the Division of Family and Youth Services in Alaska. We value the time and care you give to the children in our state. This handbook will outline the policies and guidelines of the Division of Family and Youth Services (DFYS) and help you in your journey as a foster family. You may be caring for a relative or opening your home to an unknown child or providing care to a delinquent youth. Whatever your involvement, we appreciate your commitment. Thank you on behalf of the children who need your care!

Your Role As A Foster Parent

Your role is to provide a safe place for a child to live while the child's family tries to repair itself or until a permanent home is found. Your job is to care for the child to the best of your ability and make day-to-day decisions regarding the child's care. A foster parent supports the caseplan for a child by helping the child attend family visits, counseling and medical appointments. As a foster parent, you have legal responsibilities. These include respecting the confidentiality of a child and the birth family, and reporting any suspected abuse or neglect. To be a foster home in Alaska, you need to be licensed.

You may also have the hardest job of all -- to care for a child, but be ready to let the child return home or move into adoptive care. Foster care is temporary. *It is not a lifetime commitment, but a commitment to be meaningful to a child during the child's lifetime.*

Planning With Your Family

Before you welcome a foster child into your home, consider the effect upon your family. Discuss the decision with family members. Where will the child sleep and keep clothes and toys? What age and sex of child would fit best into your home? Can you meet the special needs of a child such as dealing with medical appointments, disabilities, transportation, or behavioral problems? Are your birth children prepared to share rooms, toys and attention? When you are contacted about the placement of a child, you are responsible to determine if you can provide the care needed to help this child do well. Planning ahead of time will help make foster care a good experience for all your family members.

The Children Who Come Into Foster Care

Each foster child is unique with individual needs and personality. But there are some common reasons why children come into care.

Some children come into care for *child protection* reasons, meaning a child has been abused, neglected or abandoned. If DFYS assumes physical custody of a child for child protective reasons, a child will be placed in a foster home or residential facility until further arrangements can be made. Some children come into care for *community protection* reasons.

These juveniles are involved in the court system for breaking the law. Their parents may not be able to properly supervise them or a child may be transitioning from a youth correctional facility into a community and needs a state supervised home. Still other children are in care because of *voluntary placement* by their parents. Parents may be unable to care for their children because of illness, emergencies or absence from the home.

Many children who come into foster care have special needs. Abuse and neglect can cause deep scars and behavioral or emotional problems in children. Beside the safe care of your home, these children also need a family that understands their special needs. Because children and youth in foster care are separated from families and familiar surroundings, they will need extra support from the foster home. Teens in Youth Corrections need foster homes willing to provide structure, guidance and intense supervision.

The Division Of Family And Youth Services

As a foster parent for the Division of Family and Youth Services (DFYS), you should know something about the agency. DFYS is the state agency that intervenes on behalf of children at risk of being abused or neglected. It is part of the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. DFYS is funded by state and federal money and must comply with state and federal laws. It has two primary purposes: *to protect and provide services to children who have been abused or neglected, and to protect the community from delinquent youth.* Foster parents support this mission by providing care and shelter to children in DFYS custody.

Family Services is responsible for protecting and providing services to children who have been abused or neglected. **Youth Corrections** is responsible for protecting the community from delinquent youth and providing rehabilitative services. A third function of DFYS is to protect children in out-of-home care through community care licensing of foster homes, child care facilities, private child placement agencies and residential child care facilities. All children placed in out-of-home care need to be in a licensed facility unless they are with relatives.

Family Services (Child Protection)

A family may come to the attention of DFYS in several ways: through a report of suspected abuse; a referral by another agency; or, voluntarily. In some instances, DFYS may work with a family at risk while the children remain with their birth families. In other instances the child may be placed in out-of-home care.

During the investigation of a report of child maltreatment, if a division worker judges a child is at risk for harm if left in the care of the child's caretakers, the division may take emergency custody. The worker then needs to go to court to justify the action and to keep custody. Meanwhile, a child is placed into an emergency shelter or foster home or may remain in the home of a relative for protection. In accordance with Alaska law, DFYS cannot assume emergency custody unless one of the following conditions exists:

- The minor has been abandoned.
- The minor has been grossly neglected by the minor's parents or guardians and immediate removal is necessary to protect the child's life or health.
- The minor has been subjected to abuse by the minor's caretakers and immediate removal is necessary to protect the child's life or health.
- The minor has been sexually abused and is not or cannot be protected by the minor's caretakers.

The placement worker develops a caseplan in collaboration with the birth family whenever possible. This caseplan includes a plan for foster care, which should be developed in collaboration with the foster parent. When taking emergency custody of a child, the placement worker tries to obtain information regarding the child's medical and educational history to share with the foster parent. The placement worker is the lead for follow-up planning for placement and arranges for services and support for the child and birth family. Placement

workers provide testimony at court hearings, keep appropriate documentation, monitor the progress of the birth family, and participate in long-term placement decisions.

Family Services foster homes care for children who may have been abused, abandoned, neglected, molested or exposed to traumatic events. Family Services foster homes will work with the placement worker in setting up the foster care plan, and communicating any concerns or observations about the child's behavior or adjustment in foster care. The foster parent's primary role will be to provide a safe place for the child to live and develop, but on occasion, the foster parent may be asked to work more directly with the child's birth family.

Youth Corrections

Children come into Youth Corrections when they are accused of a criminal offense or an act prohibited by court order and are referred by a law enforcement agency. An intake assessment is conducted to determine if formal court action is necessary or whether diversion (such as community service or informal probation) is appropriate.

Youth Corrections is a system of intake assessment, probationary services, and youth detention and correctional facilities throughout the state. At the time of referral, an accused delinquent may be placed in an emergency shelter, attendant care shelter, a foster home or may remain in the home of a parent or relative during the intake stage. If a youth is adjudicated by the court for a delinquent offense, the youth may be put on probation and may continue in a parent's custody, or placed outside the home if necessary to ensure adequate care and supervision. Youth Corrections strives to provide the least restrictive and most appropriate available placement setting for the youthful offender while adequately protecting the community.

The probation officer enforces the conditions of probation. The probation officer develops a treatment plan that includes collaboration with the foster parents on the plan of care in the foster home. The probation officer leads the treatment team, counsels the birth parents, and monitors the youth's progress. The probation officer should be in contact with the foster parent regularly and may provide testimony at court hearings.

Youth Services foster homes will work with the probation officer by carrying out the plan of probation and notifying the probation office of any violations of the conditions of probation or concerns about the youth. Youth Corrections foster homes may be asked to provide "sight and sound" supervision. Sight and sound means providing intense supervision by always keeping the youth in sight or within hearing.

Community Care Licensing

DFYS licenses foster homes, foster group homes, child care homes, child care centers, residential child care facilities, maternity homes and child placement agencies. Licensing is a preventive program that reduces predictable risks to the health, safety and well being of children in out-of-home care. Regulations, policy and statutes set an expected standard of care that furthers the DFYS mission of protecting children from harm. DFYS can also enter into formal agreements with other agencies to evaluate homes for licensing.

The role of the licensing worker is to screen applicants, conduct background checks, complete an on-site evaluation of the prospective foster home and conduct a family assessment. All of this is done in accordance with foster care regulations established to ensure the child's care and safety in out-of-home care. Licensing workers help foster parents meet standards, investigate complaints of regulation violations, and enforce regulations. In smaller communities, the DFYS staff who places a child with you may also have the role of licensing worker.

The foster parent works with the licensing worker by providing documentation of fulfillment of licensing requirements such as documenting fire drills, training, and child records. The foster home also notifies the licensing worker of changes in the home and works with the licensing worker when renewing the license on a biennial basis.

Rural And Urban Differences

Alaska is a large state and foster families can be found in most communities. In larger communities such as Anchorage, Juneau, Ketchikan, Kenai and Fairbanks, there are many placement workers and probation officers. All foster families are also assigned a licensing worker. In smaller communities such as Dillingham, Homer, and Barrow, there may be only one probation officer and one social worker and no licensing worker. In even smaller communities, the placement worker or probation officer may be in a different village or community. Your placement worker may also be your licensing worker. The laws of the state and the regulations of the foster care system apply to all licensed foster homes in the state wherever they may be. However, smaller communities may not be as formal in their procedures. One social worker may play several roles. Foster families may be recruited on an emergency basis for a specific child. What is the same across the state is that foster care is intended to keep children safe.

If You Are A Foster Parent For A Private Child Placement Agency Or A Tribe

Some foster homes in the state are recruited and evaluated for licensing by a private agency other than DFYS. These agencies may be licensed child placement agencies or licensing partners under agreement with DFYS. Often the homes of an agency other than DFYS will specialize in providing care for a child with special needs (such as developmental delays or emotional disturbances), children associated with a specific tribe, or children who are being adopted. This handbook is intended for foster homes licensed directly through DFYS, not through private child placement agencies. If you are a foster parent for a private agency or a tribe, contact the agency or tribe for its handbook. Private child placement agencies and tribes may have different polices and procedures for foster homes to follow.

📖 *References To Other Materials*

This handbook is intended to be a comprehensive guide to foster care in Alaska based on DFYS policies and procedures and the statutes and regulations of the State of Alaska pertaining to foster care. For a copy of the foster care regulations, please contact your licensing or placement worker. Other helpful references include:

Understanding The Regulations: What Alaskan Foster Parents Need to Know

This series includes topics that explain what foster care regulations require. Topics include:

1. Parenting/Behavior Management
2. Development of Young Children
3. Child Health and Medications
4. Nutrition and Eating
5. Safety
6. Foster Parent Training
7. Recordkeeping
8. Specializations/Foster Group Home

Becoming A Foster Family: What You Should Know

This pamphlet is an introduction to becoming a foster family in Alaska. A listing of regional DFYS offices is included.

These and other materials are available through the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center. Call 1-800-478-7307 (in Fairbanks/North Pole call 479-7307) to obtain a copy.

2. When A Child Arrives, When A Child Leaves

When A Child Arrives ☆ *Questions To Ask* ☆ *Pre-Placement Visits* ☆ *The Placement Packet* ☆ *The First Few Days* ☆ ***While The Child Is With You*** ☆ *The Foster Care Payment* ☆ *Separation And Loss* ☆*Working With The Placement Worker* ☆ *The Child's Birth Family* ☆ ***When A Child Leaves*** ☆ *How A Child May Be Removed* ☆ *Procedures For Transitioning A Child* ☆ *Requesting A Child Be Removed* ☆ *Returning To The Birth Family* ☆ *Returning Belongings And Clothing* ☆ *What Records Go With The Child?* ☆ *Saying Goodbye* ☆ *Post Placement Visits*

When A Child Arrives...

Questions To Ask When Contacted About A Placement

When you are contacted about taking a child, you should ask some basic questions to help you decide if this child will fit into your home. The placement worker (the Family Services worker or Probation Officer) may not have the following information but may be able to get some of it after the placement. For example, visitation schedule may not be decided until several weeks into the placement or the full extent of a child's medical needs may not be known at the time of placement. The answers to these questions will help you decide if this child will fit into your home and if you have the skills to work with this child. You have the option not to take a child if you feel the child would not be compatible with your home. You may not admit a child to your home if this would cause your home to exceed the age range or number of children allowed on your license

Questions To Ask:

- Age? Sex? Ethnicity? Religious affiliation?
- Where has the child been in care? Own home? Foster home? How many different places has the child lived? What kind of contact with prior placement is possible?
- Does the child have any ongoing medical problems? Is immediate medical attention needed? Who is the child's health provider? Is the child on medication? If so, what are they and where are the medications?
- Why is the child in placement? What does the child know about the reasons for placement? Anticipated behaviors and reactions to the move?
- IF CHILD IS PLACED THROUGH FAMILY SERVICES: What kind of maltreatment has the child experienced? Physical abuse? Emotional abuse? Neglect? Sexual abuse?
- IF CHILD IS PLACED THROUGH YOUTH CORRECTIONS: What are the conditions of probation? Why is the child on probation? Any behaviors that you should be aware of? (such as sexual offending or physical aggressiveness.)
- Does the child have a history of bedwetting? Sleeping problems? Eating problems? Are there any behaviors that pose a risk to other children in the home?
- Who are the child's parents, relatives, close friends? Does the child have siblings?
- Are there any special conditions on visits? Anyone the child is not allowed contact with? What is the anticipated visitation schedule?
- Any scheduled appointments? (counseling, physical therapy, medical)
- What school does the child attend? Grade in School?
- Any clothes, toys or belongings coming with the child?

Pre-Placement Visits

It is preferable and in the best interest of the child that pre-placement visits between the foster parent and the child take place. However, due to the emergency nature of most placements, this does not happen often. If you have an opportunity for a pre-placement visit, you should ask about a child's likes, dislikes and interests. Let the child get to know you and become familiar with you so that placement in your home will be easier.

The Placement Packet

You should receive a Placement Packet at the time of placement or within five working days of placement. If you do not get it, *ask for it.* This packet, a brightly colored envelope, should be used statewide by placement workers. The Placement Packet has instructions on the front of the envelope and includes the forms listed below:

- The **Consent for Emergency and Routine Medical Care.** This gives you authority to obtain medical, dental and emergency care for the child. Within the next 30 days, you should arrange for a health exam for all children over three years who have not had an exam within the last year or for all children under three years who have not had an exam within the last three months.

- The **Foster Care Plan and Agreement**. This is the plan for the child while in your home. The form details the reason for placement, goals for placement, expected length of duration or placement, medical information, educational information, and specifics about visitation. In addition, there is a place for you, the foster parent to sign saying that you agree to the plan as written. You may get the Agreement at the time of placement or within a few days. The Foster Care Placement Plan and Agreement is an important part of the overall caseplan for the child's family. The Foster Care Plan and Agreement may change as the needs of the child and family change over the length of the placement.

- The **Emergency Shelter Care Health Review**. The Health Review is completed by the foster parent for every child placed under emergency conditions. The form provides a brief review of a child's general health appearance upon placement in your home. Return to placement worker and keep a copy for child's records.

- The **Clothing Inventory and Request Form.** This form takes stock of what a child has when coming into care and is used again when the child leaves your care. If a child needs some things immediately before your first foster care payment comes in, make the necessary arrangements or submit the request to your placement worker.

- The **Authorization and Invoice Form (A & I)**. The **A & I** is the form you use to receive your foster care payment. Your placement worker fills out the left side, you fill out the right side. The **A & I** is sent in at the end of the month for payment. If you do not get an **A & I**, contact your placement worker. See **Chapter 5: Financial Matters** for more information on payment.

The First Few Days

When a child first comes to your home, the child often feels fear, confusion and disruption. Take some time to show the child where everything is in the house. Show the child the bedroom and where to put belongings. Describe your family's daily routine and house rules. Ask the child if the child knows the reason for being in your home. Offer something to eat. Explain the routine in your home. Ask the child what kinds of foods the child likes to eat. Give a young child a soft toy or blanket to hold. Make yourself available for comfort and to talk. Little things like this can help an often painful and frightening transition into your home.

While The Child Is With You...

The Foster Care Payment

The foster care payment is calculated on a daily basis for the time a child is in the foster home. Payment includes the day the child is admitted to your home, but not the day the child leaves. The foster care payment is intended for services rendered which means you receive an established daily rate for the number days a child has been in your home. This is explained in detail in **Chapter 5: Financial Considerations** of the handbook. Medical expenses should be covered by DFYS through the Medicaid program or through the birth parent's medical insurance.

Helping Children Deal With Separation And Loss

Children in foster care have experienced a traumatic move. Even when they are removed from an abusive or neglectful situation, most children miss their parents and want to go home. A child's reaction to placement depends on age, degree of attachment to parents and the events leading up to removal from the home. Some children react strongly to separation. Some seem to not show any reaction at all. Children may show signs of stress, depression, and anger. This may be expressed in tantrums, crying, eating and sleeping problems, anxiousness, bedwetting, illness or even running away.

When a child moves from one foster home to another, the child's grief is compounded. The child may still be grieving the separation from the birth family. If a child has to move from one foster home to another, the child again has to leave another family and attachment. After multiple placements, a child may develop a protective shell.

Take time to help a child feel comfortable in your home. Make yourself available to talk with or reassure the child. If you feel a child is seriously depressed or getting worse, contact your placement worker about getting additional help.

Working With The Placement Worker

The placement worker assigned to the child in your home is responsible for following the regulations and laws when working with the family. If a child is placed for child protection reasons, the worker is responsible for developing the caseplan and ensuring that it is followed. The caseplan includes the foster care plan, interactions with the court, and engaging the birth family. The placement worker may also be exploring permanency planning options. If a child is placed through Youth Corrections, you will be working with a probation officer.

Placement workers are expected to visit or meet with the child while the child is in your home. However, you as a foster parent see the child every day and have important information about the child's behavior, reactions to visits and reactions to separation. It is important that you and your placement worker have regular contact with each other through visits, phone calls, or written reports. When drastic changes in behavior occur, when you need help in getting services, or if you have questions about the child's birth family, contact the worker. If you are unable to reach the child's placement worker and you need to talk to someone, ask to speak to a supervisor.

Your Relationship To The Child's Family

DFYS follows a philosophy of Family Centered Services, which means DFYS values the importance of preserving a child's connections to the child's birth family. For this reason, visitation and contact with family members are very important. You need to support the visitations to the best of your ability and help a child stay connected to family members consistent with the foster care plan. Helping a child stay connected to his family includes sharing schoolwork with parents, not speaking badly of a child's family, and supporting visits and phone calls. The majority of children in foster care eventually are reunited with their birth families. It is important that we encourage and support that connection to a child's home.

When A Child Leaves Your Home...

How A Child May Be Removed From Your Home:

A child may be removed from your home for the following reasons:

1. At your request when an emergency makes it impossible to provide foster care.
2. At your request because you are unable to deal with the child's behavior.
3. The child is returning to the child's birth home.
4. The child is moving to a permanent placement other than your home.
5. The child's placement in your home is not meeting the child's need.
6. DFYS has received a report of child abuse or neglect in your home and determines to remove the child until the investigation has been completed.

Procedures For Transitioning A Child From Your Home:

Except in situations of an emergency in your family or during an abuse or neglect investigation, the following procedures apply:

1. Preparation should begin at least two weeks prior to the termination of placement. The DFYS worker will take the following steps to prepare the child, the birth parents, and the foster parent:
   a. Explain and discuss the reasons and circumstances for the intended move.
   b. Acknowledge and assist in working through separation and loss feelings about the change, for both the child and the foster parent.
   c. Include the foster parent in planning for the child's physical departure but also preparation for the emotional separation that will occur.
2. Moving a child from one foster home to another foster home is explored only when it appears that the placement is not meeting the child's needs or when the foster parent requests the child's removal. The following guidelines will be used by DFYS in either situation except in an emergency:
   a. A team conference between the placement worker, the foster parent, and the placement worker's supervisor will be held to discuss why moving the child is being considered.
   b. During the team conference, other actions and options that could be taken to prevent the movement of the child will be explored and considered.
   c. The reasons for the move and other options considered will be documented and placed in the child's file.

Requesting A Child Be Removed From Your Home:

If the child is presenting problems, talk with the placement worker. If you are unable to resolve the problems and feel you must request removal of a child, DFYS should remove the child within 15 days of your request. Because of the shortage of foster care placements, the DFYS worker may request that you work with them to maintain the child in your home for a period of more than 15 days after your request. Please attempt to work with DFYS to arrive at a plan that is workable for you and most importantly for the child.

If A Child Returns To The Birth Family:

The move of a child from the foster home is coordinated by the placement worker. If the child is returning home, termination of placement is usually characterized by increased frequency and duration of visits between the child and birth family. As a foster parent, you are responsible for helping the child prepare for departure. The lifebook is considered to be a useful tool for the transition, whether the child is returning home or going to an adoptive placement. Be sure you also provide essential information for the next caregiver, including an update of everything in the packet, child information guide and the lifebook, a list of any future appointments and your name and number if you are willing to be contacted.

Returning A Child's Belongings And Clothing

When a child is in your foster home, it is expected that the child's clothing will reflect the standards of the community and school. Anything you purchase for the child or anything the child purchases should go with the child. Anything the child brought into your home and wishes to take also goes with the child. The child may have an emotional attachment to these items. If the child is removed from your home for emergency reasons or runs away, you should contact the placement worker to make arrangements for the child's personal belonging and clothing to be picked up or dropped off if it is determined the child will not be returning to the foster home.

When a child returns home or moves to another foster home, the Clothing Inventory should be checked and completed.

What Records Need To Go With The Child?

When a child leaves your home, be sure all the information in the Placement Packet is updated. That includes all medical records, immunization records, and school records such as report cards. Cards, momentos, photos and drawings should be given to the placement worker to pass on to the child's next caregiver or to the birth parents.

Saying Good-Bye To Your Foster Child

A child's move, whenever possible, should be planned to give both your family and the child time to say good-bye. Ideally, preparation should begin two weeks before a move. Often, foster parents become very attached to their foster children. You may feel angry, sad or in denial when a child must leave your home. This is not only common, it is very human! If you feel grief and sadness, talk it over with your spouse, a friend, a placement worker or a pastor. You may want to take a break between placements. Some foster parents prefer to work with another child right away. Either way, we recognize that foster care is a demanding job. Take care of your own feelings in the same way you try to take care of the children in your care.

Post-Placement Visits And Contact

If a child is moved from one foster home to another, post-placement contact between a foster child and a former foster home can be allowed if it is determined not to be harmful to child. You do not have a right, however, to these visits. If a child is moved to another placement, the placement worker has the final decision regarding visits with former foster parents or others. If a child is returned home or is adopted, the desires of the child's family should be respected.

3. Daily Living

Baby-sitting/Child Care ☆ Changes to Personal Appearance ☆ Clothing ☆ Driving ☆ Early Development ☆ Employment ☆ Food ☆ Household Duties ☆ Mail ☆ Personal Property/Privacy ☆ Religion ☆ Savings Accounts and Allowances ☆ School ☆ Sex Education ☆ Sleep ☆ Social Activities ☆ TV/Videos ☆ Transportation ☆ Use of Child's Legal Name ☆ Vacations

When a foster child is in your home, you are responsible for the daily care of the child. You should treat your foster children like you treat your birth children. That means you should expect the same level of chores and give them the same things you give your own children. Your foster children, however, are different in some ways because you have to abide by DFYS guidelines for parenting children in foster care, These guidelines are based on regulations and Alaska statutes. Please use the following information as a guide in your daily care of a child.

Baby-sitting/Child Care

Baby-sitters or Respite Care: It is strongly recommended you use an adult whenever use a baby-sitter for your foster children. If you use a teenager, use an older, mature teen who has taken a baby-sitting course or who has experience with children. Never use a child under 14 years of age to baby-sit your foster children.

If you plan to leave your foster child with an adult who is not listed on your license for more than 72 hours (three days) you need to notify your placement worker. Your substitute caregiver should be the same person listed on the plan for supervision your submitted with your license application. If it is not the same person, you need to submit a revised plan for approval.

If your foster teen wants to baby-sit, you must get the placement worker's permission. This decision should be based on the maturity, history and special needs of the child. Foster children, however, should not be allowed to baby-sit for other foster children.

Child Care: In some pre-approved situations, a child in foster care may be placed in child care for a regular part of the day. Be sure that the child is in a safe place and that a caregiver does not have too many children under care. Check references. Drop in at the home or center without notice to get an idea of what the environment is like for the child. Ask your placement worker for a list of licensed child care providers or contact a local resource and referral agency. Licensed child care centers and homes have met many of the same standards that you meet as a foster home. Pick a center or home where the adult frequently interacts with the children and plans child-centered activities.

Changes To Personal Appearance

Any major change in a child's appearance (such as drastically cutting a child's hair or getting a child's ears pierced) needs the permission of the child's birth parents or the DFYS placement worker. Regular haircuts that keep a child's basic style are left to the foster parent's discretion. Any elective or non-emergency medical procedure (such as dental anesthesia or ear piercing) requires the permission of the birth parent or guardian.

Clothing

If, when a child enters foster care, the amount and quality of the child's clothing does not meet a minimum standard, DFYS may approve a clothing allowance. The clothing allowance does not apply when the child moves from foster home to foster home. A clothing allowance is used only when the child comes into custody and does not have basic items such as pants, shirts, shoes, snowsuit or boots. At present, the maximum amount of the clothing allowance is $300 depending on the child's needs based on the Clothing Inventory. When listing a child's clothes on the inventory, list only clothing that is wearable and fits the child. After placement, the monthly foster care payment is intended to cover the costs of maintenance and routine replacement of items as the need arises. As with your own children, foster children should be encouraged to be proud of themselves and the way they dress. Involve the child in selecting clothes that the child will like and feel good wearing.

Driving

The child must have a driver's license or permit in order to operate a motor vehicle. The child's parent is the only person who can legally sign the consent documents required by the Division of Motor Vehicles for a person under 18 years to obtain a driver's license or permit. If the child's parent refuses to sign, the court could appoint a legal guardian for the purpose of assuming responsibility. If a child's parents are deceased, DFYS as a legal guardian can sign the consent form. In these cases, the Family Services/Youth Corrections regional manager is the DFYS representative authorized (but not required) to sign. If the child obtains a driver's license or permit, the child still needs to get general permission from the placement worker to drive. Permission may only be granted when the following conditions are met:

1. The child has a valid driver's license or permit.
2. The foster parent wants the child to have permission to drive and is willing to supervise the child if approval is granted.
3. The child will be fully covered by liability insurance. The division must be informed if the policy lapses or is canceled. The child's approval to drive will be suspended until insurance coverage is again effective.
4. The purpose of the child's driving is appropriate, considering the child's age.
5. All vehicles the child will drive are identified and in a safe condition.
6. The child does not have a problem with the use of alcohol or drugs.
7. The child maintains a safe driving record.

Early Development

Many children who enter foster care have delays, and research shows that many children actually fall behind in development while in foster care. Actively promote a young child's development by providing a mix of quiet and active play, and a mix of playing alone and with others. Talk, sing, touch and play with young children every day. Make developmentally appropriate toys easily accessible to children. The Infant Learning Program is a great resource for developmental assessments and ideas to promote growth in early childhood.

Employment

If a child wants to work, the decision should be made jointly between the foster parent and the child's placement worker. If you and the placement worker decide that employment is feasible for your foster child, it will be your responsibility to watch for any change in attitude and behavior. Employment should be a positive experience and teach necessary independent living skills. Bring any concerns or worries to the attention of the placement worker. The foster parent should help the child file the appropriate income tax returns if necessary.

If a child in foster care is employed at a business owned or managed by the foster parent, the child must be paid the same rate as other employees performing the same job duties. The Alaska Department of Labor requires a work permit for children under the age of 16. This needs to be signed by the placement worker.

Food

Food and nutrition are important in the daily care of children in foster care. You should provide regular, balanced meals and snacks. Find out about any existing food allergies or dietary needs and plan meals accordingly. Designate a place for healthy snacks that children can eat when hungry between meals.

You should try to provide food reflecting the ethnic or cultural background of children in care, including foods provided by child's own family. This shows respect for the child and the family's culture. If you do not know how to prepare these foods, ask the child's birth family, another foster family or seek help from your local Cooperative Extension.

Except for medical reasons, you may not deny a meal to a child in foster care. You cannot force-feed a child or coerce a child to eat. Mealtimes should not turn into a battle over food. Do not use food to control or punish your foster child.

Some children may have eating problems, such as hoarding food, refusing to eat the food you serve, or eating too much without stopping. Some of these problems may be based on physical or psychological causes. Consult the child's placement worker, counselor, health provider or the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center for help if a child in your home exhibits any of these behaviors.

Household Duties

A child in foster care can be expected to share in the same chores expected of other family members of the same age. Chores should be appropriate for a child's age, health and abilities. Household chores should be shared by all family members and should not interfere with school, health and necessary recreation of the child in foster care. A child should not be expected to perform chores that are your responsibility or chores that should be shared among several individuals (for example, the entire family's laundry). It is a good idea to rotate chores to further independent living skills.

Mail

Children in care have the right to send and receive mail. Mail is the private property of the child and you should never open or read a child's mail unless the child is incapable of doing so. In special circumstances, a placement worker may request that a child's mail be monitored and may ask you to bring mail into the division office or appoint a designee such as a guardian ad litem to open the mail. If you suspect contents of a mail parcel to be a weapon or other contraband, or if mail arrives that is disturbing to the child, you should seek the assistance of the placement worker.

Personal Property/Privacy

The personal belongings that a child brings to your home are the child's property and may be of special importance. All family members should respect these items. In addition, every child should have some private place such as a room, a drawer or a closet. This private space should be respected in the same way the child's possessions are respected. When a child leaves your home, the child must be allowed to take personal items, clothing and any gifts or possessions acquired while in your home. If you buy a large item for a child, such as a desk, stereo or bed, make it clear whether the child can take this with him or if the large items are his to use while at your home. Making these things clear in the beginning prevents misunderstandings when the child leaves your home.

Privacy is important for a child. Other steps you can take to assure a child's privacy include knocking before you enter a room except when checking on a sleeping child, respecting the privacy of a child's room when the child is not there, and providing privacy for phone conversations and visits.

An exception to these privacy considerations may be for Youth Corrections homes who may as part of the plan of probation have more stringent conditions for examining and checking a child's possessions.

Religion

As a foster parent, you should recognize the religious beliefs and ethnic heritage of a child's birth family and respect the religious preference expressed by the child's birth parents. However, you need to respect the religious preference of a foster child nine years of age or older. In both cases, this means locating a resource and enabling the child to attend services of the child's religion.

You may take a child to your own place of worship if the child is under 9 years of age and the birth parents do not object. If a child is 9 years or older, the religious preference of the child should be respected. You cannot require church attendance or prevent church attendance as a consequence or a punishment for a child's behavior.

Savings Accounts and Allowances

Money earned by a child in foster care (including gifts and allowances) is a child's personal property. If a child has over $200, help the child establish a personal bank account. If a child's spending habits need to be limited, consider a savings account that requires both the child's and the foster parent's signature for withdrawal. No member of a foster home may borrow or spend money acquired by the child in foster care. You may need to restrict the amount of spending money a child has access to if in the child's best interest. When a child receives a substantial amount of money from any source other than the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend (such as earnings, gifts, etc.) report this to the placement worker.

Decisions about allowances depend upon the age and maturity of the child and how your family handles allowances. Amounts should depend upon a child's recreational activities, school needs, religious contributions, and personal grooming needs. The amount should conform to family and community patterns of providing allowances. Be sure the child understands how much the child is to receive and what expenses it is expected to cover. This money should be paid out of the regular monthly foster care payment.

School

Enrolling a child in school is generally a foster parent's responsibility. Your placement worker will tell you what is known of the child's previous school experience including the child's strengths, special needs, or problem behaviors (truancy, fighting or special class placement). Your relationship with school should be like any other parent/school relationship. Attend all parent-teacher conferences concerning the child and keep the placement worker informed of the child's progress or problems in school. If you detect problems that require special help, tell your placement worker so you both can advocate with the school. Keep copies of report cards and progress reports and share with the placement worker or keep for the child's lifebook.

As a foster parent, you have the responsibility for the child's daily school activities and for consenting to routine activities regarding education matters. You have the authority to register the child in school, consent to the child's participating in an elective course of study, school activities, one-day field trips, and organized sports. You may sign report cards and permission slips for routine educational activities. However, birth parents must consent to class trips that will interfere with court ordered parental visits. DFYS approval is required for any out-of-state trips and for trips where the child will be away from your home over 72 hours.

When a child requires an Individual Education Plan (IEP), the school district will designate a person to oversee the child's IEP. That person is usually the birth parent, but if the birth parent is unable, the school appoints a surrogate parent. The foster parent may be asked to be a surrogate parent to oversee the child's IEP.

A child may be enrolled in a private or parochial school only when:

- The child's parents (if appropriate) and the child agrees to a private school.
- The school meets the standards of the Alaska Department of Education.
- No cost to DFYS will be incurred.

If you want to consider a private school or homeschooling for the child in your care, discuss the matter with the child's placement worker.

Sex Education

Sex education is a normal part of parenting. Most sexual education is in response to children's questions. Questions should be answered as openly and honestly as possible, giving allowance for the child's age and previous experience. In some instances, schools will offer courses in sex education. You may sign the permission slip for a child to attend special classes or refer this item to DFYS for agency approval. Issues of birth control should be discussed with the placement worker. Use of contraceptives is considered a voluntary medical procedure and requires the permission of the child's birth parents.

Sleep

Your foster home should provide a bed, crib or sleeping space appropriate for the age of the child in care. You can help a child get to sleep by having a regular time for bed and a consistent routine such as pajamas, snack, brushing teeth, a story, a goodnight kiss and then to bed. For many children, a nightlight, soft stuffed animal and an open door helps keep scary night things away.

Sleep problems are common in children in foster care. Some children may have sleep disorders or disruptions as a result of trauma or separation from parents. Notify your placement worker if you see chronic sleep difficulties.

Social Activities

The foster parent may give permission for the child to engage in routine social activities, such as spending time with friends and dating privileges. For children on probation, curfew hours must agree with the conditions of probation. Use the same caution and discretion in these decisions as you would with your birth children. Some children may need stricter limits or more supervision. Foster parents may sign permission slips for routine activities such as school trips, Scout events, or sports activities if the child's absence from the home is less than 72 hours.

Television/Videos

Limit television and video viewing to no more than 1 hour for every 4 waking hours the child is in care. Choose programs carefully for younger children and help older children choose programs suitable for their age. Television, video games, and videos can be very stimulating to children. If you have children who are easily agitated or distractible, reduce the number of television programs watched.

Transportation

Routine transportation of child in foster care is the responsibility of the foster parents. This includes transportation to family visits, medical facilities, school events, social and sport activities, religious activities, shopping, and counseling appointments. A vehicle used for the transportation of children should be licensed in accordance with state and local law. Foster parents must have current liability insurance in effect. When transporting children, use car seats or safety belts depending on the age of the child.

Use Of Child's Legal Name

For legal purposes and for the child's sense of identity, a child in foster care should be called by the child's own name. A child in care should not assume the name of the foster parents. If a child asks about using your name, remind the child that even though the child's own family cannot care for the child right now, it is important to keep the family name. Foster families should use the child's real name and not give the child a different name.

Vacations

If a vacation is under 72 hours (such as a weekend trip), foster parents are not required to notify the placement worker unless the vacation would interfere with a court appointed visitation. Then permission needs to be granted from the birth parent. Notify your placement worker if the vacation will take the child away from home for longer than 72 hours or if the vacation will takes place out of state.

Don't forget the fun!

An important part of daily living includes having fun with your foster children and with all of your family members! Go to a park, take a walk, pick berries, read stories together, have a theme meal, go skating or sledding, play with a dog, teach a skill, tell a joke, try to make each other laugh, go fishing, bake cookies, play a board game, sing a song together, or listen to each other around the table. When we enjoy each other's company, we get along better and we have some good times in our "emotional bank" to help us through the difficult times.

Danger Signals

In the day to day care of a child, foster parents are often the first to see signs that a child is having a difficult time or needs professional help. The foster parents may be the first to suspect a child has experienced additional abuse or neglect. By intervening with children early, emergencies may be averted. Contact your placement worker if you see any of the following symptoms:

PHYSICAL SIGNS:

- ρ compulsive overeating
- ρ chronic loss of appetite
- ρ excessive sleep, sleeplessness
- ρ constant colds, stomach aches or other illnesses
- ρ frequent accidents

EXTREME FEARFULNESS:

- ρ frequently recurring severe nightmares
- ρ fear of people
- ρ extreme unrealistic fear of animals
- ρ persistent fear of going to school

EXTREME WITHDRAWAL:

- ρ refusing to be touched
- ρ refusing to talk
- ρ withdrawing to a room or corner by self
- ρ no eye contact

EXTREME CRUELTY TO ANIMALS OR CHILDREN:

- ρ wanting to hurt others
- ρ killing small animals or attempting to torture them

SELF DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIORS:

- ρ injuring herself
- ρ pulling out her own hair, leaving bald spots
- ρ banging head against walls or other objects

OTHER DANGER SIGNALS:

- ρ setting fires
- ρ running away
- ρ sexual acting out
- ρ suicide attempts or threat of suicide
- ρ drug or alcohol abuse
- ρ stealing
- ρ depression

4. Emergencies and Changes in Your Home

What To Do In An Emergency ✯ *After Hours Emergencies* ✯ *Your Emergency Contact* ✯ ***Other Emergency Situations*** ✯ *Serious Illness* ✯ *Criminal Activity* ✯ *Runaways* ✯ *Pregnancy Of Foster Child* ✯ *Death Of A Foster Child* ✯ ***Changes In Your Foster Home*** ✯ *Notifying DFYS About Changes* ✯ *Short Term Absence Of Foster Child Or Parent* ✯ *When You Move*

What To Do In An Emergency...

When you contact DFYS in an emergency, identify yourself as a foster parent and tell the receptionist or answering service that you have an emergency and you need to speak to the placement worker or a supervisor. If you are located in a city where the division uses an answering service for after-hours calls, tell the answering service that you have an emergency and need to have contact with division staff as soon as possible.

Even though the child is entrusted to your care, DFYS retains ultimate responsibility for the welfare of all children placed in foster care by the agency. For this reason, you must notify the placement worker about all incidents that affect the well being of the child. In smaller DFYS offices, you can share the information with any DFYS staff. In larger officers, you need to know whether to report to your placement worker (the DFYS worker working with the child) or your licensing worker. The following list defines some of the situations that are considered emergencies and to whom you should report.

Contact the child's placement worker *immediately* regarding:

- death of a child in care
- attempted or threatened suicide by a child in care
- life threatening illness, hospitalization, or emergency surgery of a child in care
- suspected runaway or unapproved absence of a child
- any attempt by a parent or other individual to remove the child from your home without your permission

Contact your licensing worker *immediately* regarding:

- the death of a child
- injury or illness of child requiring medical attention outside of your home
- fire, flood, or other disaster to your home

Contact the child's placement worker on first working day (Monday through Friday) regarding:

- pregnancy of a child in care
- severe distress or depression of a child in care
- violation of conditions of probation
- allegations of criminal conduct by a child in care

After Hours Emergencies

Each DFYS office has its own procedure for dealing with emergencies that happen after office hours or on weekends. Ask your placement worker what the procedure is for your area. If you are in a serious situation and you cannot reach DFYS, contact your local law enforcement for assistance. Contact your placement worker at the beginning of the following business day.

Your Emergency Contact

When you are licensed to provide foster care, you are asked to designate an adult who will be available to help in case of sickness, accident, or other emergency absences. This emergency contact person is also the person you plan to use during planned absences of more than 72 hours. If your emergency contact changes, you must notify your licensing worker.

Other Emergency Situations

Serious Illness

In The Foster Family: If an accident or illness of someone in your family is serious, the placement worker can help you decide whether the foster children in your care should be moved (temporarily or permanently).

In The Foster Child: Foster parents can only authorize surgery or other major medical care in an emergency when the medical problem is life threatening or would result in permanent injury. Either DFYS or the birth parents (depending on the child's legal status) must give authorization for elective medical care (for non life-threatening illness or injury).

Criminal Activity

If your foster child is involved in criminal activity, you should request assistance from law enforcement and the placement worker immediately or as soon as possible. If you are a Youth Services foster home, it is especially important that you contact your child's probation officer. If your foster child is violent, threatening, on drugs or inebriated, contact your local law enforcement agency for assistance. Notify the placement worker as soon as you can, but no later than the beginning of the next business day.

Runaways

If a child is missing, is a runaway or is gone for more than 10 hours without approval, report this to the placement worker as soon as you suspect the child has run away. If you have an idea where the child might have gone, please tell your placement worker and law enforcement agency. When the child returns home, notify your placement worker and law enforcement agency.

Pregnancy Of Foster Child

If you suspect a child in your care might be pregnant, the placement worker should be notified on the first working day after you are aware of this situation.

The placement worker is responsible for helping pregnant teens who are in division custody obtain proper prenatal care and counseling. This includes helping them explore all the options available to them during and after their pregnancy (including preparation for parenting or relinquishing the child). The worker may also make referrals for other available services. The child will probably remain in your care if your family is willing to adjust to the needed changes in the treatment plan.

Death Of A Foster Child

It is the very rare occasion that a child dies in foster care. It is a traumatic event for the foster parent, the birth family and the placement worker. If a child dies while in your care (including if the child dies in the hospital), contact the DFYS office immediately. Unless the child dies in a hospital, you must also contact the local law enforcement authority. Suicide by a child must be handled in the same manner. Should the child die of an unusual illness or accident, or if there should be any questions as to the details of the death, an official investigation will occur. Your local law enforcement agency may become involved to determine the facts and would need to ask questions of all persons, including foster parents, who had knowledge of the circumstances of the child's death. An autopsy may be required.

A death is always a difficult event for all who are affected. As a foster parent, you have no legal responsibility in relation to funeral expenses. You should be notified of the time and place of the services. Be aware that some parents may react to the loss of the child by becoming very hostile to agency personnel and foster parents because of their feelings of failure, anger and grief. You should contact your placement worker if this situation occurs. Also talk to your placement worker about resources to help you and your family with your feelings of grief and sadness. Foster families often become attached to the children in their care, and it is important that you get a chance to talk about your feelings.

Unless parental rights have been terminated, the birth parents retain the right to plan the burial service for their child. The placement worker will advise them and assist them in planning an appropriate service. This would include making them aware of the foster parent's interest in attending or participating in the service. If parental rights have been terminated, or if parents cannot be located or are deceased, the agency will assume the responsibility of planning services and may request your involvement.

The placement worker's responsibility is to inform the appropriate persons of the death and to initiate plans for the burial service and procedures. Depending upon the ability and resources of the child's birth family or guardian, the Division of Family and Youth Services will assure that financial arrangements are made for burial arrangements.

Changes In Your Foster Home

When there is a major change in your home, *don't forget to tell DFYS!* The change may affect your license or your ability to care for the child in your home. Some changes need prior approval, so think ahead. The requirements of when to notify DFYS of changes or absences in your home follows in the list below.

Notify your DFYS licensing worker 30 days or more before the following changes:

- change in foster parents in the home (marriage, divorce or death)
- change in name of the foster home
- when wanting to change the designation on the license of the sex or age of the children to be served
- change in designated space in a foster group home
- when wanting to delete or add a specialization
- addition of an adult to household for 45 days or more
- a change in the household (births, adoptions, etc.)
- when moving to a new location

Notify your licensing worker within the time frame given below in the following situations:

- change of mailing address (14 days before date of change)
- a foster parent or member of household is convicted or indicted of a serious crime (within 24 hours of knowing about the conviction or indictment)
- when wanting to relinquish a license (20 days notice)
- when wanting to change the number of children in care (20 days)

Short Term Absences Of Foster Parent Or Child From Home

If you or your foster child are away from your home for any length of time, some rules apply. You need to get approval or need to notify the child's placement worker in the following cases:

- If children are to be absent from the home for more than 72 hours
- If you plan to take the child on a trip inside the state for more than 72 hours
- If you plan to leave the child with an adult who is not listed on your Plan of Care for more than 72 hours.
- If you plan to take the child outside the state (you must request approval 14 days in advance.)

When You Move

When You Move Within Your Community

If the planned move is local, notify your licensing worker as soon as possible so a home visit can be scheduled. Your licensing worker must be sure that your new residence also meets basic fire and health standards, and provide enough room for the foster child. A foster home license is not transferable to a new address and a valid license is necessary for payment. Once it has been determined that the new home meets the standards, a revised license and identification cared showing your new address will be issued.

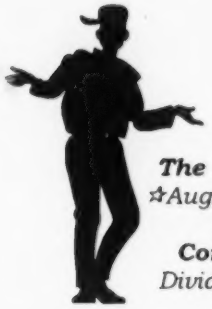
When You Move To Another Part Of The State

If the planned move is to another part of the state, the DFYS worker will be involved in any decision for a foster child to move with you. If it is decided that the foster child will move with you, you will be required to contact the division office in the area to which you are moving to have them review the adequacy of your new residence and issue a new license. In most cases, a DFYS placement worker from the office in your new location will be assigned to provide supervision for your foster child's case. The new placement worker will visit your home to get to know you and the foster child. The foster home payment rate may also change as it differs from one area of Alaska to another.

When You Move Out Of State

While each case is considered individually, the division generally does not approve such moves for a foster child if the plan is to reunite the child's family. In the event of approval for a foster child to move out of state with you, Alaska and the receiving state or county would enter into a formal agreement in which Alaska would retain custody of the child and responsibility for financial support.

The receiving state would provide licensing and placement services to the foster child and would send regular reports to the DFYS worker in Alaska. The foster care payment would continue to be paid by Alaska only for 60 days or until the new license is received. The rate in the receiving state would be adjusted according to the rate paid by the receiving state.



5. Financial Matters

The Foster Care Payment System ☆ *Standard Rates* ☆ *Emergency Shelter Rates* ☆*Augmented Rates* ☆ ***Other Situations That May Apply*** ☆*Runaways* ☆ *Stand-By Homes* ☆ *One-Time Costs* ☆*Damages And Loss* ☆ ***Other Financial Considerations*** ☆ *Income Tax* ☆*Liability Insurance* ☆ *Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend* ☆ *Child Support Enforcement* ☆ ***How The Payment System Operates*** ☆ *Instructions For Completing The A & I Form*

The Foster Care Payment System

Foster care payment rates are established yearly by the Department of Health and Social Services. Foster care payment rates include *standard rates*, *emergency shelter rates*, and *augmented rates*.

Foster care payments are considered reimbursements to offset the costs associated with caring for a child so that the cost of care does not burden the foster family. The foster care payments are not intended to be a wage. Foster care payments are intended to offset costs you have already incurred, which means you submit your billing for the days you have already provided care in the previous month. Your family should have a stable income other than the foster care payment and not depend on foster care payments to pay rent or time-sensitive necessities.

Standard Rates

Standard rates for foster home care include payment for the following:

- Food, including meals and snacks.
- Clothing replacement and on going needs.
- Shelter, including utilities and use of household furnishings and equipment.
- Personal and grooming items for the foster child, such as tooth brushes, diapers, haircuts, and other essentials.
- School supplies and regular school activities.
- Games, toys, books, and equipment costing less than $100 per item that are appropriate to the ages of children in care in sufficient quantity to promote normal growth and development.
- General recreation such as picnics, community sports and movies.
- Usual transportation expenses on behalf of the foster child (including the purchase of bus passes and reasonable local travel to the child's primary home for visitation).
- Allowance for the foster child.
- Baby-sitting and child care (except as provided in 7AAC 53.050 (b) (5)).

Foster care reimbursement rates vary by community because of geographic differences in the cost of living. Check with your local office for current rates.

Emergency Shelter Rates

Emergency shelter rates are paid to a licensed foster home with a specialization for emergency shelter care. The emergency shelter rate applies when children are placed in a foster home with less than 24 hours notice. Emergency shelter rates for a child may be paid for a maximum of 10 days for any one placement. Emergency shelter rates are 120% of the standard rate. If the child continues to stay in your home, the foster care payment rate then would revert to standard rate payment.

Augmented rates

Augmented rates may be available in two circumstances. One is for *ongoing direct costs* that may be incurred in caring for a child and the other is for *specialized foster care.* When the standard foster care rate is augmented, an extra amount is added to the daily rate for a certain period of time.

Ongoing Direct Costs For ongoing extra costs that may be incurred in caring for children who have special needs, eligibility under Medicaid, the Crippled Children's Program or other appropriate resources will be determined before the augmented rates are requested. If the extra costs are covered by another program, augmented rates cannot be paid.

Examples of extra costs that may be appropriate for augmented rates include transportation exceeding 50 miles per week to frequent home visits or frequent medical appointments; extraordinary clothing or laundry costs; special diets that require the purchase of special foods for a child who cannot eat a regular diet; and child care or respite care costs. Augmented rates or ongoing costs should be approved at the time of placement on the Foster Care Plan and Agreement. The placement worker needs to apply and to receive approval for these rates. Re-determination is made every six months or when the child changes placement. Care should be taken to distinguish augmented rates for ongoing extra care from one-time expenditures which are payable as one-time costs.

Specialized Foster Care: A specialized foster care rate is an increased payment made for extra services incurred in caring for children who have special needs. The amount is determined on the basis of the level of care and supervision required for the child and the ability of the foster parent to provide care at that level. This level of need is determined through the Foster Care Plan and Agreement that is filled out with the foster parent at the time of placement. The needs of the child will be assessed every six months or when placement changes. If the level of services needed decreases, the foster parent will receive 30 days notice of a change in payment rate.

Other Situations That May Apply...

Runaways

If a child is missing, is a runaway or is gone for more than 10 hours without approval, foster care rates may continue for a maximum of five days. The five day payment may be made whether or not the child returns as long as the foster parent immediately notifies the placement worker when a child in care is absent without approval for 10 hours or more. If the child does not return within the five-day period, that foster care space becomes available on the sixth day unless other arrangements are made with the DFYS worker. If DFYS determines within the first five days that the child will not be returned to your home, payment will continue through the date of the determination, not the full five days.

Stand-by Homes

In some communities in Alaska, DFYS contracts with emergency or stand-by homes to act as continual emergency nighttime shelters for children coming into care who do not yet have a foster care placement. These homes have strict rules regarding availability of beds and need to be available during evening hours and on weekends. These homes receive a stipend for keeping a certain number of beds on hold for emergency placement and also receive a foster care payment for the number of days children are actually placed in their home. The foster care payment for the number of days children are actually in the home is not taxable. However, the stipend for keeping a certain number of beds open is subject to taxation.

One-time Costs

One-time items are goods or services that are not included in the foster care payment because they are one time or short term costs that exceed $100. You may request one-time funds for a foster child when there are no other resources for payment. Make a request in writing to your placement worker. You should receive written approval of reimbursement for the expenditure prior to purchasing the goods or service. For one-time costs, you need to go through your placement worker who will evaluate the request and if in agreement, submit a Request for Funds form through the appropriate channels.

Examples of items that may be approved one time costs include:

- Special cribs, beds, mattresses, prosthetic devices, orthopedic shoes or appliances and aids for the handicapped.
- Special event costs such as graduation costs if the child is placed less than 90 days before the event.

Damages And Loss

Costs related to modest damages and losses are normal in the care of children and are included in the standard rate. However, the division will reimburse a foster parent for damages and loss up to $5000 under certain circumstances. These may include financial losses resulting from physical injury inflicted by a foster child to a member of the foster family household or to property of the household not covered by other insurance policies. These losses must be documented by the foster parent (including filing a report with law enforcement if required by the division) and corroborated by the division. The following circumstances must exist:

1. The damage or loss is a result of a deliberate act with malicious intent or with gross negligence on the part of the child.
2. The foster parents provided adequate supervision and exercised appropriate precautions considering the child's maturity and behavioral history.
3. Damage or loss claimed does not include rental or other payment for lost time or lost use of the damaged or lost items.
4. The damage or loss exceeds $100 for a single event or $150 cumulative.

You must submit a completed Loss Report within 72 hours from the time of the loss or physical injury. You may obtain this report form from your local or regional office. A foster home is expected, though not required, to own basic home insurance. The $5000 is intended to cover the deductible in case of fire or other major damage if all the above conditions are met.

Other Financial Considerations...

Income Tax Of The Foster Parent

The payment you receive for providing regular foster care is considered reimbursement for expenses incurred in providing care for the children in your home. Special increased payments for children requiring extra care are usually also considered as reimbursement. However, if your home is a specialized stand-by emergency home that receives a payment incentive to keep beds available, the incentive payment or stipend is considered taxable income. The foster care payment you receive for the actual children who stay in your home is not taxable. Contact your nearest Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for more information on what portions, if any, of foster care payment must be reported as income when you file your federal income tax return. Refer to **IRS Publication 17** under the section for Dependents in Chapter 3.

Liability Insurance

Liability coverage is provided for all DFYS foster families through the Alaska Department of Administration, Division of Risk Management. This coverage is designed for legal actions brought against the foster parents because of accidental injury to the child or damage caused by the child to someone else's property or person. This coverage is in effect during any time that you are providing foster care.

State liability protection is extended to a foster parent for allowing a foster child's participation in a risk activity that is not usual for the community if written permission is obtained from the child's parent or guardian or from the division.

Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend Check

The placement worker is responsible for applying for the foster child's Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend Check for every year the child is in care. The money will be held in trust for the child until the child emancipates from foster care or until custody is returned to the birth parents or to a permanent placement where the child is not in division custody.

Child Support Enforcement

When a child comes into care of the state, whether through public assistance or foster care, DFYS is required to contact the State of Alaska Child Support Enforcement Division. Child support will open a file and contact the birth parents for child support contributing to the care of a child. If child support is paid by the parents of a child in foster care, the money goes to the state to help cover the costs during the time the child is in out-of-home care.

How The Payment System Operates

Foster parents are paid based on the Authorization and Invoice (A & I) form that is submitted at the end of the month. Your payment will be for "services rendered" or for the days you have already cared for the child. You should receive the initial A & I form at the time of the child's placement in your home. At the end of each month or after the removal of a child, complete the form for that month and mail to the address on the backside of the form. At this time, the computer system will automatically check the social services plan and check the payment system. If both systems agree with the A & I, the system will generate payment for the amount of the billing.

If the plan is for continuing placement of the child in your home, the worker may indicate on the initial A & I form that the State office should issue a new month's Authorization and Invoice directly from the computer. If this is the case, your A & I form will be mailed directly to you from Juneau. If this is not the case, your worker will provide you with a new A & I form each month. If you still have the child but have not received a new A & I form by mid- to late month, you should contact your placement worker.

The A & I form should be completed and mailed as soon as the service ends for the month (the first of the new month or when a child is removed from your home). The sooner you submit your A & I form, the sooner a check can be mailed to you. The A & I form must be completed, dated and mailed after the last day of service being billed.

Summary of Instructions For Payment:

1. Get the A & I form when a child is placed with you or it will be mailed to you for a child who is already in your home.

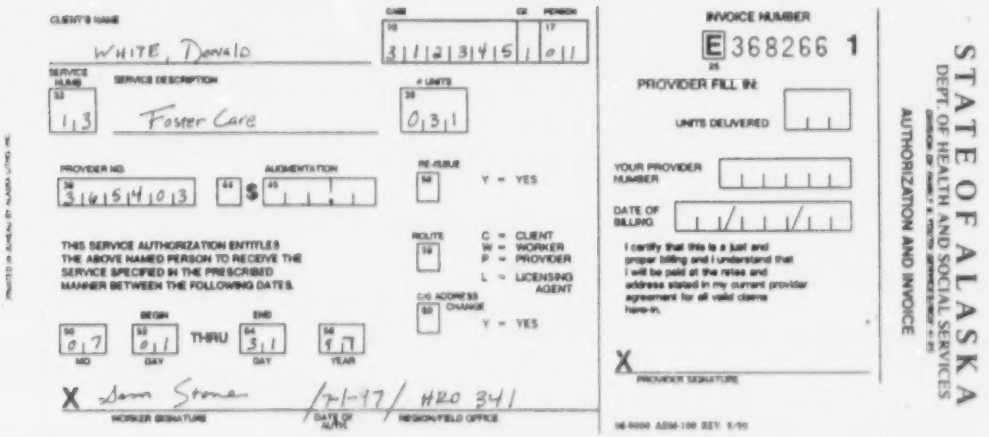
2. Complete the A & I at the end of each month or when the child is removed from your home. Fill out an A & I form for each child.

3. Mail or fax the A & I to the address on the back of the form for payment.

Instructions For Completing The Authorization And Invoice Form (A & I)

IMPORTANT NOTE TO FOSTER PARENT: Your billing has to match what is in the state's record or else the computer will not issue you payment. Please be sure to complete the A & I correctly. You provide an important service to DFYS. In return, DFYS wants you to receive timely and accurate payments. Correct completion of the A & I will help the process go smoothly.

When you first get the A & I, it should look like this:



Your placement worker completes the left side of the form (or the computer if it is issued directly from Juneau). Do not enter any information on this portion of the form but review it for accuracy.

1. *Review the left side of the form.*

- Is the "Client's Name" the same as the foster child in your home?
- Does the box "# Units" show the number of days the child was in your home during the billing period?
- Do the "Begin" Date and "End" Date cover the period for which you are to bill?
- Is the A &I signed by the social worker or probation officer? (EXCEPTION: *Computer issued A & I do not have a worker's signature.*)
- Is your "Provider Number" listed correctly?

IF ANY ITEM IS INCORRECT, CONTACT YOUR PLACEMENT WORKER!

2. *If The Left Side Is Correct, Complete The Right Side Of The Form.*

To complete the form, you need to enter the following information:

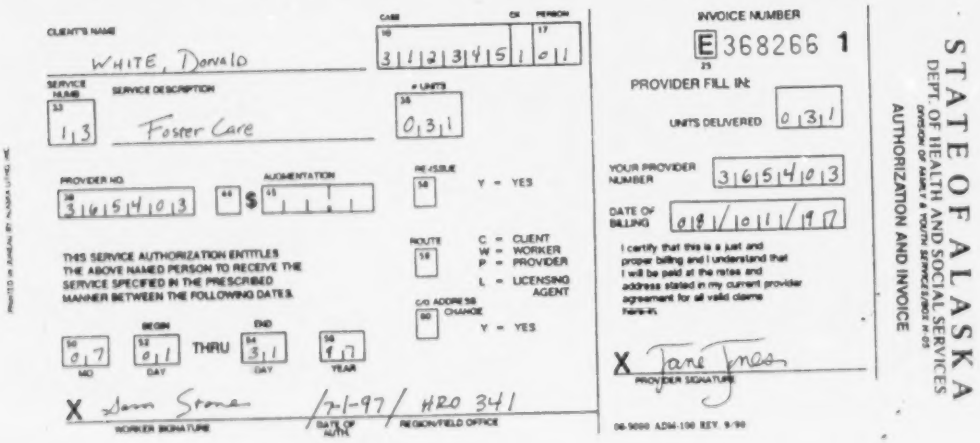
1. UNITS DELIVERED: Enter the number of days the foster child was in your home during the month. Enter only one number per box. The number of Units Delivered should not exceed the number of days in the month or the number of authorized units, and should not include the day the child is removed.

2. YOUR PROVIDER NUMBER: Enter the six digit number from your license, one number to each box.

3. DATE OF BILLING: Enter the date you are submitting this bill. You cannot submit a bill until after you have delivered all the services. This is generally the last day of the month unless a child is removed from your home in the middle of the month. In that case, the last complete day in your home is the end date, as payment is not made for the day of removal. To enter the dates, enter first the month (2 digits) then the day (2 digits) then the year (2 digits.) Example: if you submit the bill on September 1, 1997, the date would be entered as 09-01-97.

4. PROVIDER SIGNATURE. Sign the A & I using your legal signature.

This is what the A & I should look like after you complete it:



3. *Submit the A & I for payment.* You may mail or fax the A&I to DFYS.

- ***Mailing the A & I:*** The provider should mail the A & I to: (this address is on the back of the A&I form.)

  Division of Family & Youth Services
  ATTN: Provider Payment Section
  P.O. Box 110630
  Juneau, Alaska 99811

- ***Faxing the A& I:*** The provider may also fax the A & I to DFYS at (907) 465-3190 or (907) 465-3397. The fax machines are left on 24 hours a day 7 days a week. If you fax your A & I form, it is recommended to contact the provider payment section at (907) 465-3085 or (907) 465-3136 to verify receipt of the A & I. If you call in to verify receipt of the A & I and you reach voice mail please leave your name, telephone contact number, how many A & Is forms you submitted, and the last name of each child. Your call will be returned with verification of receipt of the

photocopying the form. If the copy is blurry or unreadable, the fax will probably be unreadable too. If a fax is received and the numbers or signatures are missing or illegible, the A & I cannot be processed. If your A & I does not photocopy well, it is best to mail your A &I to DFYS.)

- ***Waiting for Payment:*** The Provider Payment Section of DFYS currently processes one check run a week. Every Wednesday at 11 am is the deadline for the receipt of provider A & I, and the payments are mailed out every Friday afternoon. Those A & I not received by 11am Wednesday will be processed the following week. This schedule will be subject to change depending on state holidays.

  The foster parent should allow 2 to 10 working days for delivery by U.S. mail. If the foster care provider loses a check or suspects the check is lost in the mail or is stolen, the provider should contact the provider payment section. A stop payment can be placed on the missing check and another check can be re-issued.

☹ Problems?

1. If you should loose or destroy an A & I, contact the placement worker or your local DFYS office and request a duplicate to be issued.

2. If you have not received your A & I by the 25th of each month and still have a child in your home, contact the placement worker or local field office.

3. If your check does not arrive or is not the amount you expect, contact the child's placement worker. Contact the placement worker if you have any questions about:

   - Not receiving your check
   - Undue delay in the receipt of your check
   - Check is not for the correct amount
   - The number of days for which you are authorized
   - The rate you are being paid
   - Special delivery instructions

4. If you cannot reach your placement worker or still have questions regarding payment, you may contact the DFYS Provider Payment Section in Juneau at (907) 465-3136 or (907) 465-3085 or (907) 465-2528.

The Division of Family and Youth Services strongly values the services you give by being a foster parent. In return, the Division will strive to make timely and accurate payments to its providers. Help us by filling out your form correctly and submitting it soon after the end of the month.

6. Medical Care

Getting Medical Care For A Child ☆ *Emergency Shelter Care Health Review* ☆ *Consent For Emergency And Routine Medical Care* ☆ *Parental Consent* ☆ *Medicaid Eligibility* ☆ *Indian Health Service* ☆ ***Ongoing Medical Care*** ☆ *Immunizations And Check Ups* ☆ *Keeping Medical Records* ☆ *Medications* ☆ *HIV/AIDS Testing* ☆ *Medical Care While Traveling*

Getting Medical Care For A Child...

Emergency Shelter Care Health Review

When a child is placed with you under emergency conditions, you are asked to complete the **Emergency Shelter Care Health Review**. This is a form in the placement packet that assists you in determining the immediate health condition of the child. The review asks you to make note of the child's general appearance including any visible signs of injury such as bruises, scratches or cuts. The foster parent should ask about any pain or discomfort and make note of the answer. Finally, the Health Review asks the foster parent to ask the child if the child is taking medication, undergoing special medical treatment or has an illness that puts others at risk. These questions help the foster parent determine immediate health needs. Report any finding of concern to your placement worker.

Consent For Emergency And Routine Medical Care

When a child is placed with you, you should receive a *Consent For Emergency And Routine Medical Care* form. If you do not receive one, *ask for it.* Foster parents are responsible to make sure children get regular medical care (immunizations, dental and medical exams). Foster parents need the Consent Form to obtain routine and emergency care for children in care. Do not provide written consent for any medical examination or treatment of a child unless you have been given a written delegation of authority through the *Consent for Emergency and Routine Medical Care.*

As a foster parent, you are responsible to secure routine medical care for a child just as you would for your own children. Foster parents are also responsible for getting emergency care for a child when necessary. The *Consent* form allows you to secure emergency care when the medical problem is life threatening or would result in permanent injury. If a child needs emergency care or hospitalization, contact DFYS as soon as possible.

When Parental Consent Is Needed

If a major medical procedure (including major dental treatment) is required that is not an emergency, consent must be obtained from the birth parent. If parental rights have been terminated, DFYS must consent to the procedure.

Drugs prescribed for mental illness or behavioral problems are called psychotropic drugs. Psychotropic drugs are considered *non-emergency major medical care* and must have the consent of birth parents or DFYS approval if parental rights have been terminated. Birth control is also considered non-emergency medication and needs consent of the birth parent.

Medicaid Eligibility

Most children who enter foster care are eligible for Medicaid. Medicaid covers the cost of the foster child's medical care, dental care, pharmaceutical services and any health needs. In order for a child to receive Medicaid coverage, the child's placement worker must submit an application form to the Alaska Division of Public Assistance. Upon approval, Medicaid coupons are then mailed to the address on the form. These coupons can be taken to the medical provider (doctor, pharmacy or hospital) for payment at the time of the child's appointment. If the child already has a medical or dental care provider, it should be noted on the *Consent Form*. For continuity of medical care, you should try to use the child's health care provider. You should check with the health care provider to be sure that the provider accepts Medicaid coupons. Should you have trouble locating a health care professional in your area who accepts Medicaid, contact the DFYS office in your area or a public health center.

If you do not get your coupons and a child needs care...

- Contact your placement worker for emergency coupons. If there are no coupons, get a letter from the placement worker stating that the coupons have been applied for.
- Contact the Div. of Public Assistance Medicaid Services and explain your situation.
- Some Medicaid providers will provide service and ask you to bring in the coupons when they arrive.

If a child is not Medicaid eligible, payment for medical care may be handled in one of several ways. For children in Youth Corrections, birth parents may be responsible for medical bills. If a child has no resources for medical care, DFYS is financially responsible for these services. In those cases, the medical provider can bill the division directly for service provided. However, prior authorization from DFYS is required. Before any discretionary medical or dental treatment is provided, it must be pre-authorized by DFYS. Medicaid criteria will be used by DFYS to determine if a procedure or treatment is routine regardless of the child's eligibility for Medicaid.

The Indian Health Service

If a child is Alaska Native or American Indian and eligible for the services of the Indian Health Services, a foster parent may use the Indian Health Services clinic in the community.

Ongoing Medical Care for A Child...

Immunizations And Check Ups Through The Healthy Kids Program

Every child in foster care needs to be immunized according to the schedule outlined in E.P.S.D.T. (*Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment*) Program, also know as the "Healthy Kids" Program. E.P.S.D.T. is a program funded through Medicaid that provides medical assistance to children in foster care. When a child is placed with you, try to determine within the first month of care whether the child's immunizations are current. The immunization record may be attached to the medical consent form or the consent form may indicate the location of the child's immunization record. Ask the child's placement worker for assistance if the record is missing or check with the child's health provider. If a child is not up-to-date with immunizations, make an appointment with a doctor or health care provider.

Children also need regular check ups and health care according to the E.P.S.D.T. schedule. This schedule is available through any health clinic or medical provider. Regular screenings are offered at public health centers and these screenings can also help detect special needs and provide referrals.

Try to find out when the child last saw a health care provider. This information may be hard to get because it may not be known at the time of placement. Always ask for it, however,

and keep records of what you were able to find out and what information was not available to you. If you could not get any information, document attempts you made to get it.

Schedule a physical exam for the child coming into your care within 30 days of placement, unless the child had an exam within the last year. For a child three and younger, the exam should have been within three months of the child's placement in your home. Children over three years old need a dental exam once a year. Screenings, exams and immunizations are part of the E.P.S.D.T. program and are available through community public health centers and clinics.

Research has shown children in foster care are often behind the norms in health, so your role in helping a child get immunizations and check ups is important!

Keeping Medical Records

Keep all records of care or treatment your foster child receives. These records will go with the child when the child leaves your home. If no documentation was provided by the health care provider, keep a log of the care the child receives.

If a child is seriously injured such as sustaining a black eye or deep cut or requires medical care for an emergency, you should notify your placement worker. Notify your licensing worker as well regarding any serious injury or illness requiring attention by a health provider. You may file an incident report (Form D084-LIC-08) with DFYS if you wish.

Medications

A foster parent may administer prescription medicine and special medical procedures to a child only as authorized by a doctor or legally authorized health provider. If a child is taking prescription medicine, keep the medication in its original container. This container should have a label showing the date filled, the expiration date, instructions, and the physician's or health provider's name. Keep all written records regarding the medication.

If treatment is completed and medication is left over, **throw it away!** *Do not save the medicine used with one child to treat another, even if you think the child has the same illness!* Unused medications spell trouble in a house with children. Keep all medications out of the reach of children. For common illness or injury, a foster parent can use over-the-counter drugs. Use these medications only according to directions unless a health provider indicates otherwise. If you receive different directions from your health provider, get those instructions in writing.

If medication for behavioral or mental problems (such as drugs for depression) is prescribed, seek approval from the placement worker before filling the prescription and administering to the child. Drugs prescribed for behavior or mental health conditions are usually considered *non-emergency major medical care* and must have the consent of birth parents or DFYS approval if parental rights have been terminated.

HIV/AIDS Testing

A foster parent is not allowed to have a child tested for HIV/AIDS infection without prior approval by the placement worker.

Medical Care While Traveling

When you are planning to travel with a child in care, remember to take the **Consent For Emergency And Routine Medical Care** and the child's Medicaid coupons with you. In the event of an emergency that requires medical treatment and/or hospitalization, you must have proof that the child has medical coverage. Should the physician or the hospital refuse to accept Medicaid, DFYS will reimburse you for the amount of the bill. You will need a receipt for services rendered.

7. Health and Safety

Baby Walkers ☆ Car Seats, Seats Belt ☆ Childproofing ☆ Fire Safety and Fire Drills ☆ First Aid ☆ Guns and Firearms ☆ Pets and Animals ☆ Participating in Risk Activities ☆ Sleeping Babies ☆ Supervision of Children ☆ Smoking and Second Hand Smoke ☆ Universal Precautions ☆ Water Safety

Baby Walkers

Baby walkers are not allowed in foster care. Baby walkers have a high accident rate and research suggests that walkers and other restraining devices may also cause delays in a child's development.

Car Seats, Seat Belts

In Alaska, children under four years of age are required to be in a car seat when traveling in a car. Children older than four years of age are required to be in a seat belt. Sitting in the back seat or securing the car seat in the back seat is the safest place in a car for a child. Do not place a young child in the front seat of a car if there is an airbag, even if the child is in a car seat. Airbags have been associated with a high rate of injury to children when children are seated in the front seat. Children should never be allowed to ride in the back of a truck.

Childproofing

Making your house safe for children is called "childproofing." The regulations require childproofing as follows:

- For children under 5 years, install childproof cover caps in electrical outlets not in use and accessible to children.
- Keep hot water temperature at no more than 120 degrees. You may need to install a control if your hot water heater does not have one. Burns are some of the most common injuries to children.
- Store all cleaners, medicines, matches, lighters and harmful substances where children cannot get them. Do not keep your cleaners underneath the sink. Keep medicines out of reach of children. Lock up or put out of reach all sharp tools such as knives, utensils, scissors, screwdrivers, nails, etc.
- If you have babies or toddlers, use good hygiene when diapering. Wash your hands and the child's hands frequently. Dispose of diapers in containers with lids or have a system for cleaning and sanitizing cloth diapers. Clean and sanitize the diaper changing surface frequently.
- If two or more young children are being cared for, label bottles and pacifiers. Do not let children share used pacifiers or bottles. When reusing bottles, clean and disinfect bottles either in a dishwasher or by boiling them for five minutes before use.

Fire Safety and Fire Drills

Foster homes must meet basic fire safety standards. A licensing worker will inspect your home to determine if these standards have been met. Foster homes need to have a plan for getting children out of the house during a fire. *Fire moves fast!* Think ahead about what you would do in a fire and practice your plan with the children.

1. Practice fire drills once a month unless there is bad weather. If the children in care are 12 years and older and have practiced the fire drill at least three times in your home, fire drills can be practiced once every three months. Agree on a meeting place outside the house. If you care for a child younger than 30 months old or with special needs (such as deafness or in a wheelchair or crib bound), you need to specify a way to evacuate that child in your fire plan and practice your plan.
2. Document your fire drills. Regulations require that evacuation can take place in under 150 seconds.
3. Have a working smoke detector and a fully charged fire extinguisher (2A:10BC) on each level of the house.
4. Check your home for safety. Store flammable or combustible liquids in containers with tight fitting lids and out of the reach of children. Be careful with heating appliances. Do not locate heating appliances in exit ways, hallways, and sleeping areas (unless your home does not have separate sleeping rooms).

Especially in Alaska, it is important to check your escape windows often to assure that they are not frozen shut during winter months. If your home uses a woodstove, be sure it is properly installed and used. Clean the stack frequently. Take special precautions to supervise children around a woodstove and teach them safety rules to prevent injury.

First Aid

Current certification in First Aid and CPR (coronary pulmonary resuscitation) is not required of foster parents in the state of Alaska, but it is strongly recommended that all foster parents at least learn the basics of treating minor injuries. Your house should have a first aid kit or supplies for small injuries such as cuts, scratches, burns and scrapes. You should know what to do for a choking child or a child who is bleeding or is not breathing. This is especially important if you are caring for a child with medical complications. A simple first aid chart is available through DFYS or through your local health clinic. If you are interested in first aid training, contact the Red Cross, licensing worker, school, emergency services or the health service or hospital in your community.

Guns And Firearms

If you have guns in your home, you need to use and store your firearms in a responsible way in order to prevent injury to children in your care. The foster care regulations specify that firearms need to be stored *unloaded* and *reasonably inaccessible* to children. Ammunition is to be stored separately from the guns and in a place that children cannot access.

You must have the permission of the placement worker before you allow a foster child to use a gun. If an older foster child is allowed to handle a gun, foster parents must submit a firearm safety plan to the licensing worker for approval. You need to put in writing how you are going to teach the child how to use the gun safely.

Pets And Animals

Pets can be a therapeutic experience for most children in care. Good sense should guide the foster parent in keeping pets a safe experience as well. Foster parents should take care to keep cages and pets clean and free of disease. Change water daily. Make it a habit, and teach children, to wash hands after handling pets. If you have pets in your home, be sure the child in

your care is not allergic to animals. If children are unfamiliar or frightened by a pet, introduce them gradually and teach children proper pet handling and care.

Foster homes should avoid dangerous animals such as dogs with a history of biting or wild animals such as skunks, monkeys, and wild rodents. Great care should be taken with turtles, baby ducks, baby chicks, parrots and parakeets since these animals are particularly prone to carry such diseases as psittacosis and salmonella.

Participating In Risk Activities

High risk activities and hazards are prohibited by licensing regulations, unless a variance is obtained. Examples of high risk activities include: a child age eight or younger riding an all terrain vehicle or snowmobile; a child of any age riding an all terrain vehicle with only three wheels; boating without a personal flotation device or in dangerous water conditions; or participating in an airborne activity such as hangliding.

Participation in organized sports and other risk activities that are usual in the community in which the child resides is normal and appropriate for a child in care. For example, ice fishing would be usual in some communities, but not in others. A young child should not be exposed to a risk activity except under close supervision or until the child is developmentally ready.

If an older child wants to participate in an activity of moderate risk such as participation in a contact sport or activities not common to your community, you must get permission from the child's placement worker. A licensing variance might also be required.

Sleeping Babies

Recent studies show a correlation between babies sleeping on their tummies and a higher rate of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.) Pediatricians now advise parents to place sleeping babies on their backs or their sides to minimize the risk of SIDS. Check on sleeping babies regularly. Keep the crib free of small objects, cords, stuffed toys with small parts that can be bitten or chewed off, and large, soft pillows. All of these may present a safety hazard to infants.

Supervision Of Children

You should supervise the children in your home according to their age and needs. If your foster child has special needs or requires individualized care, you may need to limit the number of children in your home in order to provide an adequate level of care and supervision. If a child is emotionally delayed, immature or aggressive, you may need to provide close supervision regardless of the child's age. Set clear limits about places to go and when to be home. Ask children to call you when they arrive or leave events and avoid leaving children unsupervised for long periods of time. This may be stricter supervision than you are used to giving to your birth children. Your supervision plan needs to include a designated adult who is available to help in case of sickness, accident, or other emergencies. Notify your licensing worker if your emergency caregiver changes.

For children in Youth Corrections, you may be asked by the placement worker to provide "sight and sound" supervision. This means that the child must be with your sight or within hearing at all times. Audio monitoring device may also be suggested for a child with extraordinary medical needs or for a newborn child.

Smoking And Second Hand Smoke

Smoking is prohibited in a room where there are foster children under 30 months. This means if you have infants and toddlers in care, you need to smoke in a different room than the

children. It is never a good idea to smoke in the same room as children of any age. However, regulations allow smoking in the presence of children older than 2 1/2 years if you submit a plan describing how you will protect children from second hand smoke in your foster home and the plan is approved.

Universal Precautions

Foster children often come into care with little known about their medical history. To keep foster children and families safe from contagious diseases, the regulations require all foster homes to follow Universal Precautions to reduce risk against the spread of Hepatitis B, giardia, HIV, and other infectious diseases. Universal Precautions reduce the risk of diseases passed through bodily fluids. Bodily fluids include blood, saliva, feces, vomit, and semen. Everyone in your house should follow these health practices including respite workers and baby-sitters.

Parents and children alike should wash their hands before handling, preparing or eating food, setting the table or handling dishes or silverware. Always wash hands with water and soap after using the toilet, assisting a child in using the toilet, or changing diapers. Teach children to wash their hands after using the toilet. Some Universal Precautions specific to preventing the passing of hepatitis and HIV include the following:

1. *Wear disposable latex gloves when you encounter blood or when you have open sores or cuts on your skin or hands and have contact with bodily fluids.*

2. *When changing a diaper, use disposable gloves if there is visible blood in the feces or if you have sores or cuts on your hands.*

3. *Use disposable materials like paper towels to stop bleeding or when handling bodily fluids. Dispose of any tissues or paper towels in a sealed plastic bag placed in a covered container (such as in a plastic bag in a garbage can with a lid).*

4. *Clean up blood soiled surfaces and disinfect surfaces with a fresh solution of 1 part bleach to 9 parts water.*

Water Safety

Drowning is a major cause of death in Alaska. If water activities, such as boating or swimming or fishing, are a regular part of your family life, make safety a priority. In Alaska, state law mandates that children under 13 years wear a Personal Flotation Device while boating. Always supervise children when around riverbanks or beaches and never let a child swim alone or unobserved. Teach children good water safety practices and review the safety rules each time you are around a body of water. Always check the weather forecast before a boating trip

Children can also drown in the home. It only takes as little as an inch of water for a child to drown. Empty buckets and containers of water when not in use and drain water from sinks and bathtubs after use. Keep toilet lids down and do not leave young children alone in the bathtub.

8. Positive Parenting

Being A Positive Parent ☆ *Child Development* ☆ *What About Rules?* ☆ *What Are Positive Ways To Manage Behavior?* ☆ ***What Is Not Allowed In Foster Care?*** ☆ ***Parenting Difficult Children*** ☆ ☆ *When Nothing Works* ☆ *Taking Care Of Yourself*

Being A Positive Parent To The Child In Your Care

As a foster parent, you are responsible for guiding and protecting a child while the child is in your home. This means caring for the child's physical needs, and providing guidance and support for the child's emotional and social needs. Foster parents should develop skills to help children grow up to be responsible and capable. As a foster parent, you are expected to:

- Help the children in your care develop age appropriate patterns of behavior that foster constructive relationships and an increasing ability to deal with everyday life.
- Provide positive reinforcement, redirection, realistic expectations, and consistent limits with the children.
- Treat the foster children in your care the same way you treat your own children.

Child Development

Many children who come into foster care have developmental delays. Delays can be physical or emotional or social. If foster parents do not actively promote a child's development, children could fall further behind *while in the foster home.* A foster parent should provide structure and daily activities that encourage development in children.

A good foster home provides an environment that will help a child grow and develop. This means providing opportunities for quiet and active play, indoor and outdoor play, and play with other children. Your home should have toys and materials appropriate to the child's age and developmental level. Talk to the child in your care often, even if the child is still a baby. Touching, rocking, singing, exchanging smiles, and looking into a child's eyes are all ways to stimulate development in a young child.

Do not routinely leave a child awake in a crib for more than 15 minutes without adult contact. Talk to the baby, pick him up, rub his back or tummy for few minutes, play with the baby, change the toys in the crib or put on some music. If a child regularly uses a playpen or restraining device, be sure the child has frequent periods of play outside of the device.

Look for delays! If you feel a baby or a young child is delayed in development, mention your concerns to the placement worker and to your health provider. Because you observe your foster children each day, you may be the first to detect delays or potential problems. The Infant Learning Program is a good resource for foster parents throughout the state and can assess development and provide activities for the foster parent to share with a child to further development.

What About Rules?

Let each child in your care know the rules in your house soon after the child arrives so that the child will understand your expectations. Children in foster care may come from a home with very different rules than those in your home. Genuine communication with the child will greatly benefit your relationship, especially at times when you must take corrective measures.

When making rules, remember to:

1. Make the rule clear and repeat it often.

2. Rules can be simply stated: You may not hurt yourself, others or things. Better yet, state rules in the positive. That is, state your rules so the child will know clearly what you want. For example: *"In this house, we eat with our spoon and fork."* instead of *"Don't eat with your fingers!"*

3. Rules should be based upon what can be reasonably expected from the child's age and emotional development.

4. Be consistent in enforcing the rules.

5. Work with the probation officer or placement worker to develop an effective behavior management program geared to the need of each individual child. If you are fostering a Youth Corrections child, make sure your rules support the conditions of probation.

What Are Positive Ways To Manage Behavior?

Besides establishing some simple rules for your home, what are other positive ways to parent the children in your care? Here are just a few:

- **Model desired behavior:** Remember, children imitate the adults around them. Set an example by the way you act.

- **Good Communication:** Talk to children about their behavior. Give them specific information about what you expect. Give praise and let your children know how you feel when they do well. Remind them of rules and calmly talk about problems.

- **Practice! Practice! Practice!:** Don't just tell—show! Teach a child how to do a chore or complete a task by showing him how to do it. Role-play (or practicing for a specific situation) and have the child practice using words to deal with his feeling.

- **Childproofing:** Set up your house so that children are safe and potential problems are minimized.

- **Structure and Routines:** Children do best when they can predict what is going to happen. Have regular meal times, bedtimes, chores, and expectations about what happens after school. This gives children a sense of security and helps your home operate more smoothly.

- **Make a list or chart of what you want the child to do:** This is a good way to encourage self care habits such as routines for getting up in the morning or going to bed at night. Providing stickers for young children or a point system to earn a special privilege for older children provides extra incentive for learning new behaviors.

- **Consequences:** Help children learn to take responsibility for what they do. Consequences teach children that they need to accept how their actions affect others. Natural consequences are great teachers. **FOR EXAMPLE:** *If you don't wear your mittens, you have cold hands by the time you get to school.* Logical consequences mean you use a result that is directly connected to the child's actions. **FOR EXAMPLE:** *If you do not take care of your bike or toys, you lose the privilege to play with them.* Pick consequences carefully. Remember — you need to live with it, too!

- **Call a time-out:** Time-outs help children (and parents) get back in control. Time-outs should give either parents or children a time to cool-off and calm down. Keep a time-out brief. It should be no longer than 10 minutes for young children because young children have a sense of time that is much longer than adults do. Generally a time-out should last one minute for each year of the child's age. Come back together and if needed, talk about what happened and how to deal with it next time.

- **Supervision:** You may need to stay close to a child with particularly difficult behaviors. You may need to closely watch the child's behavior and offer firm support. Plan on spending lots of time with the children in your care. Children need to feel the support of the adults around them.

What Is Not Allowed In Foster Care?

The foster care regulations clearly state what types of discipline are not allowed in caring for a foster child. These restrictions are designed to keep the foster home a safe and positive place for children. When you agree to be a foster parent, you are agreeing that you will follow these guidelines.

A child in care may not be:

(1) removed from the other children for more than 10 minutes for a young child *(unless approved in the treatment plan for the child);*
(2) disciplined in association with food or rest;
(3) punished for bedwetting or actions in regard to toileting or toilet training;
(4) subjected to discipline administered by another child;
(5) deprived of family contacts, mail, clothing, medical care, therapeutic activities designated in the child's plan of care, or contact with the child's placement worker or legal representative;
(6) subjected to verbal abuse, to derogatory remarks about the child or members of the child's family or to threats to expel the child from the foster home;
(7) placed in a locked room;
(8) physically restrained, except when necessary to protect a young child from accident, protect persons on the premises from physical injury, or protect property from serious damage and then only passive physical restraint may be used; or
(9) mechanically restrained, except for protection such as seat belts.

No spanking or corporal punishment may be used on a child in care. That means no hitting, slapping, pinching, hair pulling, hand slapping, ear pulling or other physical actions that cause pain or discomfort to a child. Foster parents are not allowed to have romantic relationships with their foster children.

Parenting Children With Difficult Behaviors

Some children in care have a pattern of very difficult behaviors. Some children in foster care are reacting to the separation and grief of being away from family and being in a strange place. Some children have a history of abuse and neglect and may be showing the impact of maltreatment. Some children are emotionally disturbed or suffering from mental health problems. Sometimes children have a physical condition such as Attention Deficit Disorder or Fetal Alcohol Syndrome that may cause difficult behaviors. These conditions can cause a child's behavior to be very difficult and challenging to a foster parent who may not have dealt with the behaviors before.

As a foster parent, you are not alone. If you are caring for a child with a particularly difficult behavior, you should consult your placement worker about getting help. A therapist who works with your child is an excellent resource for helping you put together a program that helps the child learn control at home. Having a plan or a regular method you use with a child will help you consistently deal with problems. It will also help you *work with* a child instead of *punishing* the child for things that may be beyond the child's control.

When Nothing Works ...

Get help! Sometimes you have tried *everything* and could use some help! Try a buddy system with another foster parent to get a fresh view of the child's behavior. The child's placement worker may have insight into an issue. If the child is in therapy, the child's counselor may be helpful. Keep a log of the child's behavior or patterns to help plan a strategy to address problem areas. Other parents and foster parents are great resources! Find resources in your community to assist you, such as support groups, parenting classes, workshops or help lines. Or call the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center at 1-800-478-7307 for more ideas.

And most importantly, take care of yourself!

Foster parenting is very stressful, especially if you have a child with difficult behaviors. Take time for yourself, even if it is just a few minutes each day. Take breaks from your children. Learn to count to ten in stressful situations. *Only when you take care of yourself can you take care of the children in your home!*

9. A Child's Birth Family/ Relative Foster Care

Family Centered Services ☆ **Working With A Child's Birth Family** ☆ Interactions With A Birth Parent☆ Parental Consent ☆ **Keeping Children Connected To Their Families** ☆ The Child's Feelings☆ Respecting A Child's Culture Or Ethnic Heritage ☆ Visitations ☆ Possible Problems In Visits ☆ Visits With Relatives and Visits ☆ Lifebooks ☆ **Relative Foster Care Placements**

Family Centered Services

In the late 1980's, DFYS began a philosophical change toward "family centered" services. Family centered services puts greater emphasis on working with the birth family to prevent removal of a child. When a child needs protection and is placed in out-of-home care, there are efforts to reunite the child with the child's birth family. If reunification is not possible, DFYS will seek a permanent home for the child. As a result, foster parents may find themselves having frequent contact with a child's birth family, most often in the form of visits. Regardless why a child is placed in care, the child's family remains important. A foster family is expected to support a child's relationship with the birth family.

Working With A Child's Birth Family

Interactions With A Birth Parent

Your level of contact with a birth parent will depend on you, the placement worker and the caseplan. How you and the birth parent get along will be different in every situation. Sometimes, a birth parent may see a foster parent as a threat. You are now "the parent" to the child. The birth parent may feel angry, ashamed or belittled in your presence. The birth parent may feel jealous if the child shows affection toward you. Some birth parents try to regain control through criticizing how you dress or feed the child. Some birth parents will complain to the placement worker about you or allege the child is being abused or neglected in your home. It is difficult not to take these things personally. However, it helps to remember that a birth parent needs a way to stay connected with the child. Caring about how a child is dressed or is fed is a strength. When possible and appropriate, try to find ways to involve a parent, such as bring a snack to visits so the parent can feed the child or ask the parent's opinion about a situation. If the goal is to reunite families whenever possible, we should encourage a parent's attempts to care for the child.

Other birth parents may use you as a support or a confidante. No matter what your relationship is with a birth parent, your first responsibility is to support the caseplan and care for the child. It is important not to take sides with the birth parent against the placement worker or allow visits outside of the visitation schedule established in the caseplan. Remember as well that foster parents are obligated to share important information affecting the child with the placement worker. Encourage the birth parent to share concerns and questions with the placement worker.

Your attitude and interaction with a birth parent is also very important to the child in your care. When children are placed in foster care, they are at great risk for thinking that their family is "no good" and that his parents are bad. The child often interprets this to mean that he, too, is "no good." If a foster parent can communicate to the child an attitude of compassion, the child is more likely to avoid this trap. Neglectful and abusive parents were very likely mistreated as children and no one was there to help them. This is often part of their anger toward the agency and toward foster parents. By being compassionate and having realistic

expectations of birth parents, you will be more effective in constructively interacting with them and with talking with the child in your care.

Parental Consent

DFYS must obtain the permission of the birth parents of the foster child for the following situations:

- Enlistment in the armed forces
- Marriage
- An Individual Educational Plan
- Publication of the child's photograph
- Non-emergency surgery or medical care
- Psychotropic Medications
- Vacations (when they interfere with court ordered visits)
- Permission to take the GED test
- Driving

When the parents are deceased or their rights have been terminated, DFYS has the authority to consent to some of the above situations. Others need to be approved through the courts. Since there are specific procedures for each of the above situations, you should always contact the placement worker to find out what is required.

Keeping Children Connected To Their Families

The Child's Feelings

A child in care may have many different and conflicting feelings about birth parents. The child may feel sad, angry, embarrassed or confused. The child may love the parents and feel guilty for breaking up the family or getting the parents in trouble. A foster parent can help a child with these stormy feelings by keeping a nonjudgmental attitude about the birth parents. It helps to let the child talk about family members without your expression of disapproval of the family.

A child's family should be respected. If you have any negative feelings about a child's family, do not to relay these to the child. Foster parents are prohibited from making derogatory remarks about the child or the members of the child's family. Encourage a child to send birthday cards or take pictures or classwork to show to a parent at visitations. Do not minimize the abuse a parent may have done to a child, but point out the strengths and good qualities of a child's family. This keeps a good connection between a child and his family.

Respecting A Child's Culture Or Ethnic Heritage

If you are fostering a child who is from a different race or culture than your family, you are asked to promote a healthy sense of that child's culture. This may include making arrangements for the child to attend cultural events that reflect the child's heritage or continuing cultural activities that are familiar to the child. It may also mean making a special effort to serve cultural foods that the child may be used to eating.

The placement worker should tell you the name of the child's tribal affiliation or cultural group. With the placement worker, the foster parent should jointly work with the parents, relatives and the tribe to identify cultural events, foods and activities important to the child. Local organizations, tribal associations and schools can also assist with local cultural events that may be relevant to the child. If you have a child from a different culture or race, make it a point to help the child connect to events that reflect his background. Churches and holiday celebrations are often good events to help a child connect. If a child is placed in a different community, often the best times for visits with family may center around community

cultural events or gatherings. If a child will be spending a holiday or birthday in your home, ask how the child's family celebrated and try to incorporate some of the traditions into your celebration.

Visitations

The placement worker will discuss visitation for any foster child in your care when the placement is made. The plan for visitation should be outlined in the *Foster Care Plan and Agreement* you receive at the child's placement. Any change in the visitation plan should be confirmed in writing by the placement worker. The placement worker needs your cooperation to ensure that visits are a positive experience for the child. Visits may take place at DFYS, the parent's home, a public place, or the foster parent's home with the permission of the foster parent. Unless otherwise arranged, the foster parent is expected to transport the child to visits. You should receive reasonable notice of a planned visit. If you have any concerns about a child's visit with a relative or friend, you should discuss it with your placement worker. You should also be clear about what kind of telephone contact is allowed between parent and child.

Some visits or phone contact may require supervision, meaning that a designated person needs to be present when the child visits the parents. This person may be a third party or the foster parent if the foster parent agrees.

You may be asked to let the birth parent visit the child in your home. The matter of parental contact in your home is your decision. You also need to give permission before your phone number can be given to a birth parent.

Possible Problems In Visits

A parent may ask to take a child from your home or have contact with a child outside of the regular schedule. Do not let the children go with the parent without the placement worker's permission. If the birth parent demands you hand over the child in your care, do not do so. Encourage the parent to contact the placement worker or offer to make the contact. Keep telling the birth parent that you are not allowed to let the child have contact outside of the agreed visitation plan. If parents become unruly in your home, ask that they leave. Contact law enforcement if necessary.

If a birth parent arrives intoxicated to take the child on a planned visit, ask the parent to leave and contact the placement worker immediately. If the worker is not available, the foster parent may refuse to allow the child to leave with the parent under these circumstances. If the parent demands that the child be allowed to leave, law enforcement may be contacted for assistance if the placement worker is unavailable.

In case of an emergency, such as a parent not returning a child to your home as planned, contact the DFYS office or probation officer immediately. If a child returns from a visit and shows any physical signs of abuse, contact the placement worker immediately.

It is not uncommon that children show increased behavior problems before and after a visit. This may include difficulty in sleeping, more defiant behavior, tantrums, crying or general fussiness. This does not mean that the visits should stop. When children visit parents, often they are reminded of their separation or grief. They may not want a visit to end, or may become angry at their birth parent for missing a visit. They may feel a mix of loneliness, fear and confusion. These behaviors are to be expected. If children get violent, extremely ill or show signs of having been abused, it is very important that you notify the child's placement worker immediately.

Visits With Other Relatives And Siblings

The placement worker may discuss visiting arrangements with relatives and friends and request your help with such visits. If you believe that the child should be having visits with someone important in the child's life, discuss the matter with the placement worker. If a relative or friend contacts you directly about visitation with the child, refer the person to the

worker about the contact. **Do not permit the child to visit with the individual without DFYS approval.**

If a child has brothers or sisters in other foster homes, talk to the placement worker about the possibility of the siblings being allowed to visit one another. Often children are very close to their siblings and may miss or worry about brothers and sisters. If you feel a child would benefit from a visit, make arrangements through the placement worker.

Lifebooks

When a child is separated from family members, important information about the child's background and family can become lost. This is particularly true for young children. Even the child who is reunited with the child's family can experience loss because the child's parents may not be able to fill in the gaps about what happened during the time the child was in foster care. Many foster parents find a lifebook can be helpful to preserve a child's memories. A lifebook can be many things -- a scrapbook, a baby book, a photo album, or a journal that records a child's history while she is with you. You can use a folder or save items in the colored placement packet envelope. Involve older children directly in this activity. Older children may have ideas of their own of what they want to save, or may want to assemble their own scrapbooks.

Relative Foster Care Placements

Why Relative Foster Care?

The Division of Family and Youth Services strives to keep children close to their families and their culture. Following this philosophy, it becomes natural, then, to place children with people they know when out-of-home placement is necessary. When placing a child in foster care, DFYS often seeks family members or relatives who are able to care for the child. If relatives can provide a safe place for children to live, it is the preferred placement. Relative foster care provides continuity for a child's culture and can lower the separation anxiety a child feels in foster care.

If you are a foster parent for a relative (such as a niece, nephew, grandchild or cousin), you are expected to comply with the caseplan for family. You need to abide by the established visitation and contact schedule between parent and child. You cannot allow other visits or permit unsupervised contact if the caseplan does not allow it. Relative foster parents are also expected to support services for the child such as counseling or medical care. Relative foster parents are also expected to follow the same guidelines for obtaining parental consent. This means a foster parent can obtain emergency or routine medical care for a child, but if a child needs non-emergency or elective medical procedures or mental health medications, parental consent is necessary. Parental consent is also needed for all those issues listed earlier.

When you become a foster parent to a niece or nephew or grandchild through a placement by DFYS, your relationship with them has changed somewhat. When DFYS is involved, it means that there is a child protection issue or youth corrections concern. DFYS will stay involved with the child and family until the case is closed. Relative foster parents are expected to support the caseplan for the family and comply with all foster home regulations if a licensed relative foster home.

Financial Considerations

When you agree to care for a relative in DFYS custody, you are entitled to assistance in one of two ways to obtain payments to help with the additional costs to your family. Because relative children are not living with their parent, the children usually are eligible for public assistance. You need to apply for this public assistance soon after your relative starts living with you. Public assistance payments can help with food, clothing and school costs for the children. Most children on public assistance are also eligible for Medicaid. **OR,** instead of

applying for public assistance, you may choose to apply to become a licensed foster home and receive foster care payments.

Expectations Of Being A Licensed Foster Parent

When you apply to become a licensed foster parent, you are assessed against the same State regulations that all licensed foster homes must meet. The rules include being screened for criminal history, agreeing not to use physical punishment, agreeing to follow the foster care plan, basic child proofing and safety efforts, and fulfilling training requirements. If some regulations prove to be too much of a barrier there is a possibility of a ***variance***. A variance can be given if there is another way to satisfy the meaning of a rule and the health and safety of children are adequately protected. Your licensing worker can help you with applying for a variance. If the problem is minor, it can be handled as a relative variance with the licensing worker and supervisor approving. If the variance request involves risk, it will be considered by a regional variance committee.

Your Boundaries With The Birth Parents

Relative foster parents face a special challenge. Many times, the birth parent of your foster child may also be your relative, a sister, brother, daughter or son. You know these people well. Your relatives may ask you to bend the rules a bit when it comes to visits or not sharing information with a placement worker. Other family members may pressure you, too. The children's parent may accuse you of trying to turn the child against him or may try to turn the child against you. But as a foster parent, you have a legal responsibility to follow the caseplan. Talk to your placement worker if you are having a difficult time. The placement worker may be able to intercede on your behalf.

Dealing With Your Own Grief

You may feel sadness for what has happened in your family. If your own daughter or son is involved, you may feel as if you did something wrong in raising your children. It is natural to feel some of these things. But don't let your feelings get in the way of caring for the child in your home. When children grow up and become parents, they may get involved with things that have nothing to do with the way that they are raised. Especially when drugs or alcohol are involved, people engage in destructive behaviors that hurt their family. If you need to get help or talk about these feelings, seek help from your placement worker or a counselor.

Permanency Planning With Relative Foster Care Placements

DFYS tries to reunite children with their families whenever possible. But sometimes, parents may need to undergo treatment, complete a prison sentence or complete parenting classes before reunification can be considered. Until then, DFYS will ask you to care for your relative. If the child is not able to return home, DFYS will then seek a permanent placement for the child. Relatives willing and able to care for the child on a permanent basis are the first preference for a permanent placement for a child. You, as the relative currently caring for the child, may be asked to care for the child on a more permanent basis. This is a choice your family must make together.

10. Licensing Issues

What Is Licensing? ✯ *Types Of Licenses* ✯ *Your Foster Care License* ✯ *Licensing Requirements* ✯ *Variances* ✯ *Renewing Your License* ✯ *Self-Monitoring Report* ✯ *Training* ✯ *Foster Home Records* ✯ *When You Want To Close Your Home* ✯ ***Complaints Regarding Foster Homes*** ✯ *Child Abuse Allegations* ✯ *Licensing Violations* ✯ *Enforcement* ✯ *Revocation Of License* ✯ *Appealing Denial Or Revocation Of License*

What Is Licensing?

Licensing is a preventive program that reduces predictable risks to the health, safety and well being of children in out-of-home care. In Alaska, the Division of Family and Youth Services is responsible for the licensing of foster homes as well as child care centers, child care homes, foster group homes, maternity homes, residential child care facilities, and child placement agencies. The goal of licensing is "protection through prevention" by reducing risks to children ahead of time rather than intervening after a problem appears. Licensing sets standards for an acceptable level of care. Applicants must meet at least the standards specified in the licensing regulations to operate legally. Ongoing review and monitoring strive to help keep children in foster care safe.

DFYS and all other child placement agencies must place a child for full time care in a licensed facility, such as a licensed residential child care facility or licensed foster home (unless a child is placed with a relative.)

Types of Licenses

There are three types of licenses a foster home may receive:

Provisional License: This is a conditional license that is issued during a foster home's first year of operation OR when a licensed facility becomes seriously out of compliance with a licensing requirement but has a DFYS approved plan to correct the noncompliance.

Biennial License: This license is issued after a licensing worker determines that licensing standards are being met on a continuing basis after the first year of operation. A biennial license is valid for two years unless revoked or modified because a facility is not meeting standards.

Emergency Provisional License: This license allows a foster home to receive a child for care and be paid before the full licensing assessment has been completed. It is good for no more than 90 days and may not be extended.

Your Foster Care License

When your foster home has been issued a license, you will receive a document called a **Community Care License** that lists your provider number, your name, address, type of license and any conditions limiting your license. Keep this in your records. You should also receive a foster parent identification card for the same period as the dates you are licensed. This card may be helpful in getting services for children in your care or for obtaining reduced rates in your community.

Licensing Requirements

Licensing requirements are defined by law. The requirements a foster home must meet have been developed over two decades and include input from foster children, professionals, foster parents and community members. The licensing worker or representative will be covering the regulations requirements in the "standard by standard" during the visit to your home for licensure. Ask your licensing worker for a copy of the regulations summary for your own reference.

All the regulations are important, but here are a few defining requirements. During your first year of foster care, you may care for no more than two children. After one year, you can care for up to three. In a regular foster home, no more than three foster children are allowed in care unless there is an approved variance. No more than a total of 6 children (including birth children) are allowed. Foster care may not be combined with adult or day care without prior DFYS approval. Foster group homes (See **Chapter 11: Specializations**) may have different legal capacities.

A foster parent needs to be at least 21 years old and have no physical, health, mental health, substance abuse or criminal issues that pose a risk to children (including a substantiated child abuse or neglect case or a history of domestic violence). Foster parents are required to have a set of fingerprints taken and must submit to a criminal history background check through the Department of Public Safety. A foster parent agrees to abide by the regulations that govern discipline such as not using spanking and to complete annual training.

A foster home needs to meet basic safety requirements, such as having a fire extinguisher and smoke detector, storing firearms safely, childproofing as appropriate, and setting hot water temperature no higher than 120 degrees.

Most importantly, a foster parent agrees to supervise and to actively provide support and positive family experiences to a foster child and to carry out the child's plan of care.

Variances

DFYS may approve a variance from a requirement of the licensing statute or regulations if the home has an acceptable alternative means to satisfy the intent of the requirement, and the health and safety of children are adequately protected. Approval of variances should be in writing and should appear on your Community Care License if in effect for the full term of your license. If an approved variance does not appear on your license, you should have a written copy of the approval in your foster care records.

Renewing Your License

Your license should have a beginning and ending date. At the end of your provisional license, you will undergo a review with your licensing worker. In the middle of your biennial (or two-year license) you will be asked to fill out a self monitoring report to determine if your home still complies with regulations. A home visit may also be made. If the licensing worker finds a violation of regulations, you will be asked to comply with a plan of correction. For example, you might be asked to make a plan with the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center to obtain your required training hours or learn some positive parenting approaches. In serious cases of violation of the regulations, a foster parent applicant may be asked to withdraw from being licensed or the application for license renewal may be denied.

Self-Monitoring Report

During the two-year period of your biennial license, you will be asked to fill out a self-monitoring report at the one-year mark. This self-monitoring report will be sent to you prior to the end of the first year of your biennial license. A self-monitoring report is a self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is a healthy process. Your licensing worker will send this self-evaluation form to you to complete and return.

Training

Foster care regulations and Alaska statutes require foster parents to complete yearly training to remain licensed. Two parent foster homes are required to have fifteen (15) hours of training shared between the two of them. Each foster parent needs a minimum of five hours. A single foster parent needs 10 hours of training. Pre-service training provided by DFYS or a placement agency may be applied toward the training requirement for the first year of licensure. Foster parents are responsible for registering whatever training they receive with the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center by calling 1-800-478-7307. Foster parents can fulfill training hours by attending DFYS training, completing training or self studies provided through the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center, attending community or university classes, or through specialized training related to a specific child's needs. Training eligible to be counted toward the requirement includes subjects and topics related to foster care or parenting.

The Alaska Foster Parent Training Center has been set up to help you get your training hours completed. The Training Center sponsors onsite training, teleconference, and self study training all at no charge. Contact the Training Center at 1-800-478-7307.

Foster Home Records

Records Kept By DFYS: Under Alaskan law, licensing files are for public inspection. This includes child care centers and homes, residential child care facilities and foster homes. The names of children in care and their parents are deleted to protect confidentiality. Your foster care file is considered a public record. However, certain materials in your file are not open to the public:

- Material that is confidential under state and federal law (such as criminal or child protection information.)
- Material that is part of an uncompleted licensing or complaint investigation until the investigation is complete. Only the final report is made public.
- Records where disclosure would mean an unwarranted invasion of a person's privacy such as a physical or psychological report. Your background information form submitted with your license application is also not open to the public.

Licensing Records Kept By The Foster Parent: The records you keep for yourself provide a file of materials that demonstrate compliance with licensing regulations. Your licensing worker may request and has a responsibility to review these records. You may also wish to keep some records for your information or for your protection depending on the circumstances. Following is a list of records to include in your file.

- Keep your license, the name and phone number of your licensing worker (or local DFYS worker), and the name and number of your worker's supervisor. It is advisable to keep a copy of the regulations and licensing summary for reference.
- Keep a copy of any approved variances in your file. If the worker who places a child in your home and your licensing worker are not the same person, remember that

variances need to be approved through licensing, not just suggested by your placement worker.

- Keep a record of your training hours. This may include certificates, cards or signed letters from the training. The Alaska Foster Parent Training Center can help you record your hours. They can help you get a copy of the training hours you have reported to them. Call the Training Center at 1-800-478-7307 to find out about foster parent training.

- Post your emergency evacuation plan and document your fire drills. Keep a written log of when you performed fire drills and who participated.

- Keep a copy of important plans, including your plans for supervision, reducing second hand smoke, or handling of firearms where applicable.

- *Regulations require that you retain your records for at least 3 years.* These records should be available to your licensing representative to review.

When You Want To Close Your Foster Home

When you no longer wish to do foster care, contact your licensing worker. Give at least 20 days notice. In addition, contact your placement worker if you have a child in care. For other notifications of changes to your home, consult the list and timelines outlined in **Chapter 4: Emergencies and Changes to Your Foster Home.**

Complaints Regarding Foster Homes

DFYS receives two types of complaints regarding licensed providers:

- A child protective services (CPS) complaint. A CPS complaint alleges abuse or neglect of a child residing in a foster home. All CPS complaints are also allegations of licensing violations.
- A licensing complaint. Licensing complaints allege a violation of one or more licensing standards has occurred.

1. Child Abuse Allegations

DFYS investigates all reports of harm to children, including those children in foster homes. DFYS staff will investigate reports of harm involving physical or sexual abuse and neglect of a child. If a complaint alleges that sexual abuse or bodily injury to a child or another criminal violation has occurred, this is also reported to the police. The investigation may be jointly handled by a CPS investigator, licensing worker, and law enforcement officer.

If a report alleging physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect in a foster home is received:

- DFYS may remove the victim and possibly other children placed in the home until the outcome of the investigation is known.
- If a report is substantiated, DFYS will place a hold on all future placements in the home until the home has successfully completed a plan of correction or the license has been closed or voluntarily relinquished. The worker will notify the foster parents of the hold on placements when the investigation is completed.
- Licensing staff will determine whether the home should continue to be licensed or whether to move to close the home. If the foster home continues to be licensed, licensing staff will design a plan of correction with the foster parents.
- The investigation worker will notify all other workers who have children placed in a home where allegations have been made.

2. Licensing Violations

Licensing staff or other staff responsible for licensing will investigate incidents where a regulation or other standard is alleged to be violated. The licensing worker will receive the complaint and take down as much information as possible. The licensing worker will then contact you or visit your home to investigate the complaint. Based on the results of the investigation which includes talking with you, the children involved, and others, the complaint will be found to be *invalid* (the preponderance of evidence shows the violation did not take place) *unconfirmed* (the preponderance of the evidence is not conclusive either way) or *substantiated* (a preponderance of the evidence shows the regulation was violated). You will receive the results of the investigation in writing. This report also goes in your file. If the complaint is found to be *substantiated*, your licensing worker may also detail recommendations or requirements that you need to follow in order to come into compliance with regulations.

Enforcement Regarding Your License

If licensing violations continue or fail to be corrected under a plan of correction, DFYS may take certain actions to safeguard children while these situations are being remedied. Options may include:

- Modification of a license such as fewer children allowed in the home.
- Putting a hold on placements in your home.
- Changing to a provisional license until violations are remedied.
- Removal of children from your home.

Revocation of License

The last step in the complaint process may be revocation of a foster home's license in the interest of safety and well being of children. If this happens to you, you may first be approached to voluntarily give up your license. If you choose to do that, you also give up the avenue of appeal. If you refuse to give up your license voluntarily, your license may be revoked. Revocation means that your license is no longer effective and you are not a legally licensed foster home. A revocation notice will contain a letter explaining the action and the accusation, detailing the circumstances that led to the decision to revoke your license, and quoting the statutes or regulations that were violated.

Appealing A Denial or Revocation of License

Upon receipt of the notice of revocation, you have 15 calendar days to submit a written request to DFYS for a hearing. A Notice of Defense form will be sent with the notice of revocation of your license. If you wish to appeal the revocation, fill this out and return it to DFYS within 15 days. You may wish to consult with and be represented by an attorney. A hearing officer is appointed to hear the case, issue a report of facts to the Commissioner and recommend a final course of action. The hearing officer's recommendation will be sent to you or your attorney. The Commissioner of the Department of Health and Social Services issues a final decision which also will be sent to you or your attorney and will be filed with the Lt. Governor's office.

11. Specializations

Why Specialize? ✯ *Self Chosen Specializations* ✯ *Approved Specializations* ✯ *Emergency Shelter* ✯ *Pregnant and Parenting Teens* ✯ *Independent Living* ✯ *Foster Group Homes* ✯ *Placement Agency Foster Homes* ✯ ***Specialized Foster Care Agreements*** ✯ *Stand-by Homes* ✯ *Treatment Foster Group Homes* ✯ *Emergency Shelter Foster Group Homes*

Why Specialize?

Many foster homes are willing to care for children of any age or need who come into foster care. But other foster homes find it helpful to specialize. In order to make a successful placement, foster parents need to identify their assets and skills and take children into their home that match those skills. Specializing means that there is a certain type of child that you agree to work with. Or you may wish to restrict the age or sex of the children placed in your home. When foster parents are specialized in one or more areas, it allows DFYS to match the placement of a child with the skills of the foster parents, thus increasing the chance of a good experience for both parent and child.

Some specializations are *self-chosen*, meaning you identify the children you feel you can work with most successfully. Your license will indicate the age range of children you are willing to accept. Other specializations are *approved specializations* or may be part of *specialized foster care agreements* contracted with the state.

Self Chosen Specializations

If you are interested in working with the special needs of children coming into care, you are encouraged to let your placement or licensing worker know. You will be asked during the licensing process if you prefer to work with a specific type of child or behavior. Some of the areas you may choose to specialize include:

- adolescent care
- attention deficit disorder
- behavior disorders
- delinquent youth
- developmentally delayed children
- emotionally disturbed children
- alcohol affected children
- hearing impaired children
- infant care
- medically fragile children
- physically disabled children
- sexually abused children
- visually impaired children
- parent support
- young children

Self-specialization is not a formal designation on your license. It is an acknowledgement of your comfort and expertise in caring for a child with a special need. You may choose to do most of your training in this one area. An advantage in choosing an area of specialization is that it allows you a better understanding of the children placed in your care and allows DFYS to know that you are comfortable and capable in taking a child with a special need. Some foster parents specialize in two or three areas.

Approved Specializations

The regulations allow foster families to specialize in three areas to meet specific placement needs. A foster home cannot represent that it specializes in the following types of care without approval of the specialization from DFYS. These specializations should appear on your license. If a foster home is to be designated to specialize in any of these areas, the family may need to meet additional requirements. Each of these specializations also needs to be licensed as a foster group home if they care for more than three foster children or have more than six total children in the home. The specializations include:

Emergency Shelter

Emergency shelter homes are available to take children on an emergency basis. A foster home providing emergency shelter care may accept placement from one agency only and shall have one foster parent generally available in the home. In an emergency shelter home, children can be placed on short notice without a prior visit or with less than 24 hour notice. Emergency rates will be paid to the foster home for the first ten days of the child's stay. When a child is placed in an emergency situation, the foster parent conducts a brief health review of the child to determine any immediate physical needs and secure medical or dental treatment if necessary. Children stay in the foster home until an appropriate placement setting can be found or they are able to return home.

Pregnant and Parenting Teens

These specialized foster homes care for pregnant and parenting adolescents. The home may care for the pregnant adolescent before or after the adolescent gives birth and may provide care as needed to mothers and their infants. Infants not in custody are counted in the total number of children allowed in the home. These homes may use community services such as parenting education to meet requirements. Foster parents are required to have training in areas like pregnancy issues and infant and early childhood development. Foster parents educate pregnant and parenting adolescents and provide prenatal care as well as preparation of adolescents for decision making in relation to their children. These homes help pregnant and parenting teens to develop independent living skills and obtain health and education services in the community.

Independent Living (Supervised Transitional Living)

These foster homes specialize in providing care for teens for whom family reunification or adoption is not feasible. A foster home with a specialization in supervised transitional living shall provide training and support, or assist a teen access services that will help the youth successfully prepare for the transition to adulthood and independent living.

Foster Group Homes

The foster group home designation allows a foster home to care for up to 8 children total including the foster parent's own children. Of those eight children, no more than two children under 30 months can be in care. If more than six children are in care, one foster parent must be generally available in the home. The foster group home is meant to meet a specific need in Alaska. Situations arose in the past where a family was willing to care for a sibling group (brothers and sisters) but the placement would result in more than 6 children in the home. Another situation may include a group of four siblings that needs to be placed together, but only 3 foster children are allowed in any one foster home.

Foster group homes have specific space requirements for indoor and outdoor recreation space for children. There should be at least one full bathroom for every six children in care. If a foster group home has more than five children in care, a fire safety inspection is needed. If a

foster group home has only one exterior door, no more than five children can reside in the home.

Placement Agency Foster Homes

A child placement agency is an agency that arranges for the placement of children with foster or adoptive families or in a residential child care facility. There are about 20 licensed child placement agencies in Alaska. A placement agency must be licensed by the State of Alaska. Placement agencies are usually operated by a social service agency, a mental health agency, an agency that provides services for children with development disabilities or a tribal organization. Some agencies specialize in adoption or guardianship while others specialize in foster care placement. Some handle both and offer a broad range of services for families. Placement agencies review applications, complete home studies, and recommend homes to be licensed. DFYS is the agency that issues all foster care licenses in the state.

Placement agencies are agencies that make placement decisions for the homes that they use. Placement agencies may be agencies that specialize in locating families to care for a specific group of children or wish to provide more specialized treatment for families under their supervision. The foster homes regulated through placement agencies specialize in addressing issues for the clientele the agency services. If you are a home working with a specific placement agency, you will be supervised by the placement agency who places children in your home. Before taking a placement from an agency other than the agency you are affiliated with, such as taking a DFYS child when you are a Hope Cottages foster home, permission must be obtained from your primary agency.

If a complaint is made against your home, the placement agency will consult with DFYS and may investigate moderate licensing violations with the approval of the DFYS licensing representative. If an allegation of child abuse or neglect is made, the child placement agency foster home will be subject to the same investigation protocol as a DFYS foster home.

Specialized Foster Care Agreements

In a few instances, DFYS may purchase specific services from a foster home that has specialized skills that meet specific needs of children in DFYS categories. Specialized Foster Care Agreements require a written agreement between DFYS and the foster parents. These specialized agreements may be one of the three following categories.

Stand-by Homes

Stand-by homes are available to take children during the evening hours on an emergency basis. A stand-by home may accept placement from one agency only and shall have one foster parent generally available in the home. The children who stay in an emergency stand-by home are usually runaways or children taken into custody in the middle of the night. Upon emergency admission of a child to the home, the foster parent conducts a brief health review and secures medical or dental treatment if necessary. The stay in a stand-by home is usually for a few days only.

Stand-by homes receive the foster care emergency reimbursement for the days a child is in care as well as an ongoing stipend for keeping beds open and available for children. While the reimbursement for the actual days a child is in care is not taxable, the stipend for keeping beds open needs to be reported to the IRS. For stand-by homes, DFYS usually seeks foster parents with several years of experience of providing foster care. Stand-by homes currently operate only in a few locations in the state.

Treatment Foster Group Homes

Treatment foster group homes are homes with a high level of skill in a specialized area and a capacity for full-time supervision. Treatment foster group homes are contracted for specific services and must have three years of licensed foster care experience or the equivalent. The homes must have two foster parents, or one foster parent and a caregiver available for full time supervision. These homes need to collaborate with members of each child's treatment team to implement home treatment strategies defined in the youth's treatment plan. Treatment homes are required to keep written records regarding children's behavior and progress and follow caseplans in the home.. The treatment foster group home works with children and adolescents who have intensive needs, such as sexual offenders or severely emotionally disturbed children. .

Emergency Shelter Foster Group Homes

The Emergency Shelter Foster Group Homes were implemented in late 1997 and are homes that agree to be available to take children on an emergency basis. These homes are available 24 hours per day seven days a week for the reception and care of children. This type of home specializes in caring for children placed for a short period from a few hours up to 10 days. The home maintains a foster group home license for at least five children and maintains an admission/discharge log operated 24 hours and can keep children through the day. These differ from the stand-by homes in that they are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and may keep children up to 10 days. These homes differ from standby homes in that: they are not reimbursed for days children are not in care; they are reimbursed at a higher rate than a stand-by home for actual days of care; and they are licensed as a foster group home and therefore can serve more children.

12. Caseplanning and Legal Considerations

When A Child Is In Care ✯ *The Caseplan* ✯ *DFYS Internal Reviews* ✯ *Guardian Ad Litem/CASAs* ✯ *The Citizens Foster Care Review Board* ✯ ***Special Issues For Foster Parents*** ✯ *Confidentiality* ✯ *Reporting Suspected Abuse And Neglect* ✯ *Ongoing Communication With The Social Worker* ✯ *Nondiscrimination* ✯ ***Permanency Planning*** ✯ *Adoption* ✯ *Legal Guardianship* ✯ *Permanent Foster Care*✯ *Independent Living/Emancipation* ✯ *Indian Child Welfare Act* ✯ ***Foster Parent Grievance Procedure***

When A Child Is In Care

The foster parent has the very important job of the day-to-day care for a child in custody. While you are caring for the child, a series of legal and caseplanning actions begin. When a child is taken into emergency custody, a DFYS representative must appear before a judge to petition for the State to retain custody for a specified period of time. For each child in the custody of DFYS, there needs to be a formal plan for the child and the child's family. This is called the caseplan. In addition, if it is eventually determined that a child's family cannot be reunited successfully, a permanent plan of care for the child needs to be developed. Please keep in mind that while the laws apply equally throughout the state, practice and casework may vary from field office to field office.

The Caseplan

For every child in custody of the Division of Family and Youth Services, a caseplan or a written plan of care and treatment is required. Ideally, the caseplan is developed with the family. This caseplan needs to state the current overall permanency goal for the child and the plan of action to reach that goal. The Foster Care Plan and Agreement that you sign when a child is placed with you is part of the caseplan. When a child is placed in foster care, the initial goal is to reunite a child with the child's family if possible until a different goal is established at a permanency planning staffing. If the child in foster care is 16 years or older, the caseplan must include an objective which addresses programs or services to help the child prepare for independent living.

DFYS Internal Case Reviews

Every six months, DFYS conducts a formal review of the caseplan for each child in out-of-home placement. This procedure protects parents and children by ensuring up to date caseplans and assessments of progress toward permanent placement goals. The case review meets federal requirements that the division ensures that each child in care has a caseplan, that rights of children and parents are protected and that services are being provided to either reunify the family or achieve an alternate permanent placement. Foster parents are often asked to participate or provide information to be shared in the review. The case review also provides an organized forum for staffing difficult cases.

The case review is conducted by a panel of appropriate persons, including at least one who is not responsible for the case management or provision of service to the child or family. One of the panel members needs to be a community member. The first review is scheduled no later than six months after the child is taken in DFYS custody.

Foster parents should be notified of the six month review (time, date and place) at least ten days prior to the review and have the option of participating via phone or written comments if they cannot attend. The review may proceed without the foster parent if the foster parent cannot attend. If you attend in person, bring the Placement Packet and any updated educational or medical records you may have. Foster parents do not participate in the portion of the review specifically addressing the birth parents.

Guardians Ad Litem / CASAs

When a child is placed in out-of-home care, the court appoints a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) to advocate for a child's best interest. The GAL reviews the information and may talk to the child, social worker or foster parents. The GAL then makes a written recommendation to the court based on what they perceive as actions in the best interest of the child. The GAL may be an attorney, trained advocate, or staff member of the State of Alaska Office of Public Advocacy. In the Anchorage and Mat Su areas, a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), a trained and supervised volunteer, may fulfill this role under the supervision of a Guardian Ad Litem. You may be contacted by the GAL or CASA regarding how the child is doing in care. The GAL or CASA may also want to talk with the child. To find out who the GAL is for your child, ask your placement worker. If someone presents himself as a CASA or GAL, always ask to see identification.

The Citizens Foster Care Review Board

In 1980, the United States Congress enacted the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act to address the problem of children who stay in the foster care system too long without a plan for permanency. As part of state legislation resulting from this act, the Citizens Foster Care Review Board was instituted and given the mission to provide oversight through a six month case review process so that children in Alaska do not linger or stay in out-of-home care for longer than necessary. Panel members include Alaskan citizens who represent the interest of the community. They review cases to determine the appropriateness of placement is consistent with the caseplan, to determine compliance with Indian Child Welfare Act, and to assure that progress is being made. The Citizens Foster Care Review Board is held separately from regular six-month DFYS internal review. Currently, the Citizens Foster Care Review board operates in Anchorage only, with plans to expand to other areas of the state.

Special Issues for Foster Parents

Confidentiality

DFYS is responsible for maintaining confidentially of all information concerning the people it serves. This responsibility extends to you in the performance of your duties as a foster parent. The placement worker will be sharing all necessary information with you about the child that enables you to care for the child. The standard of sharing information is on a "need-to-know" basis. You are expected to respect the privacy of the child and the child's family by keeping information about them confidential. You may share pertinent information about children in your care with other individuals when necessary for the provision of care, treatment or supervision of the child. Appropriate information can be shared with doctors, teachers, counselors or baby-sitters.

You should be careful not to share background information about child abuse/neglect or the child's family with your relatives, friends or neighbors. You should not identify a child as a foster child when possible. When speaking about the child in the child's presence, it is important to be sensitive to the child's feelings so he or she is not embarrassed or singled out as being different.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse And Neglect

Under the State of Alaska reporting statute, certain persons are required to report suspected abuse and neglect. These mandated reporters include foster parents. If in the performance of your duties of a foster parent you have reasonable cause to suspect a child has suffered harm as a result of child abuse or neglect, you should report the suspected harm immediately. It is not the intent of the reporting mandate that persons investigate suspected child abuse or neglect before they make the required report. You should report any suspicions of harm or past harm to a child in your care when you have a reasonable cause to suspect that abuse or neglect has occurred.

Ongoing Communication With The Social Worker

You as a foster parent have a valuable window into how a child is adapting and adjusting. Often a foster parent will see problems before a placement worker will. It is important that you notify the placement worker when you see any problems, concerns or behaviors that might be unusual or indicative of a larger problem. This is especially important if you are seeing behaviors such as sexually acting out, depression, physical aggressiveness, mental health problems, suicidal or extreme anti-social behaviors. Keep the child's placement worker informed through telephone calls, e-mail, voice mail messages or written documentation. If you need to talk to your placement worker and you cannot contact the worker or if you need to talk to someone immediately, contact the placement worker's supervisor for assistance.

Nondiscrimination

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was approved July 2, 1964. This act is intended to prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs. No person in the United States shall, on the grounds or race, religion, color, national origin or handicap, be excluded from participating in, be denied the benefits of or be subjected to discrimination under a program or activity receiving federal financial assistance or child welfare service. The Alaska foster care program receives federal funding and therefore, cannot discriminate in the provision of services..

If you believe you have observed any discrimination by staff or a vendor, such as providers of medical services, in relation to the services this agency provides to foster children in your home, you should inform your placement or licensing worker.

Permanency Planning

The goal for the child for the first year of placement is nearly always an attempt to reunify the family. However, by the time of the second six-month review, or one continuous year in out-of-home placement, it is necessary to evaluate whether reunification will be achieved in the near future or if another form of permanency needs to be pursued. Permanency planning review is often part of the second six-month review. The division evaluates the success of efforts to reunite the family, the needs of the child and other factors, including how long the child can wait to have a permanent family.

If reunification is no longer feasible, the child's case goal will become one of these permanency options: **Adoption, Legal Guardianship, Permanent Foster Care or Independent Living/Emancipation.**

1. Adoption

The primary purpose of adoption is to ensure that every child, including children with very special needs, has a family who can give them the love, care, protection and opportunities essential for their healthy personal growth and development. It is the right of every child to be part of a family.

The objective of the division's adoption program is to place for adoption all children for whom adoption is the goal through the effective recruitment of families willing and able to be adoptive parents. To be eligible for adoption, the child must be in the legal custody of the department and if old enough, be accepting of the concept of adoption. In addition, parental rights must be terminated or voluntarily relinquished, although in some cases it is possible to make a legal risk/foster adopt placement prior to legal termination if it is in the best interest of the child.

a. Adoptive Placement of Non-Native Children: In making recommendations regarding adoptive placement of non-Native children, DFYS must first consider placement with relatives unless it is not in the best interest of the child .

b. Adoptive Placement of Native Children: In making recommendations regarding adoptive placement of Native children, DFYS must follow the guidelines of the Indian Child Welfare Act. The order of preference for the adoptive placement of Native children are:

1. A member of the Native child's extended family.
2. Other members of the Native child's tribe.
3. Other Native families. Preference goes to a family that shares the child's Native/Indian heritage and language group. If the attempt to find a family of similar heritage and language fail, then preference moves to consider a different Native/Indian Group.
4. A non-Native family.

If you are interested in adopting a foster child who is in your home, talk with the division worker to determine the child's legal status and where you fit according to the preceding placement preference rules. In some cases, especially when there are no relatives or Native families available to adopt the child, foster parent adoption may be considered.

2. Legal Guardianship

Legal guardianship is another option in making a permanent plan for a foster child. Guardianship is appropriate for children who have developed a close relationship with their foster family and for a number of reasons cannot return to their own homes and adoption is not feasible. Guardianship is a legal process by which another adult is given custodial responsibilities for the child. This option may be recommended by the permanency planning staffing for certain older children or children in relative placements, where the child may not wish to be adopted, or the cultural customs are most closely followed by guardianship. In any case, the guardianship family must commit to be the child's guardian until the child reaches 18. The guardianship must be approved through a court proceeding.

A Note on Adoption and Guardianship Subsidies:

Under both federal and Alaska statute, adoptions of special needs children may be subsidized, in order to assist the adoptive family in meeting the needs of the child. Special needs children include children over the age of five, sibling groups, minority children, and children with physical or emotional handicaps. Subsidies are negotiated on an individual basis with the adoptive family. Since 1990, Alaska law also allows for subsidy of certain types of guardianships.

3. Permanent Foster Care

In some situations, reunification is no longer the goal, but termination of parental rights is not feasible or for some other reason adoption or guardianship is not possible. In these few cases, the permanency planning staffing may approve permanent foster care as the permanent goal for the child. Formalized permanent foster care may

be appropriate when it would allow the child to remain in a stable placement that has exceeded one year, and other permanency goals are not feasible for legal or casework reasons.

If permanent foster care is to be implemented, the worker will first discuss the option with the foster parent and the child to see if this is something wanted by both. The social worker then presents the case to the permanent placement staffing team.

4. Emancipation, Preparing For Independent Living

Emancipation may be the best option for children in division custody who are at least 16 and who will in all likelihood reach the age of majority while in the foster care system because a permanent family plan is not possible. Emancipation is a legal procedure in which a youth is released from a guardian's control. Emancipation is a major step in a young person's life. It has serious and immediate consequences. The responsibilities of adulthood can be overwhelming for a person who does not have a stable living situation and a steady income. For this reason, emancipation will only be granted to a minor who is living responsibly on his or her own. Emancipation must be approved by a judge and the youth must be at least 16 years old, be living separate and apart from guardians and be able to support himself and manage his own affairs. A young person emancipated by a judge has the same rights and responsibilities as any legal adult with the exceptions of: not able to buy, sell or serve alcohol until 21 years of age; not able to vote until 18 years of age; and, not able to buy tobacco until 19 years of age.

For other children in care who are 16 years or older and are in foster care, federal requirements require that some form of preparation for independent living be included in their caseplan. The DFYS worker may ask your assistance in providing education and assistance in teaching a child skills that would allow him to live independently as a young adult. If you are preparing a child for independent living, contact the Alaska Foster Parent Training Center for materials to help in this area. Areas in which youth should receive independent living education include:

- money management
- obtaining housing
- sexuality education
- vocational or employment training
- legal services

Foster homes can help a youth locate:

- birth certificate
- social security card
- driver's license
- education record
- medical records
- job resume
- reference letters
- list of known relatives, addresses, phone numbers

Indian Child Welfare Act

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is a federal law passed by Congress in 1978 to protect Native families and communities from the loss of their children. ICWA requires state courts and child welfare agencies to respect the need for Native children to grow up within their own culture. The act applies in the following circumstances:

- Whenever DFYS or an individual starts a court case which might result in Native children being removed from their home

- Whenever there is a court case to terminate a parent's right to their Native children
- Whenever a Native child is moved from one foster home or institution to another foster home or institution
- Whenever a Native child is placed for adoption
- Whenever Native parents or custodians want to voluntarily place their children in foster care or relinquish their parental rights.

When Native children are placed outside their home in foster care or being placed for adoption, DFYS must try to follow the order of placement preference that is mandated in ICWA. The placement preference for adoptive placements is explained under adoption above. Following are the placement preference for foster care placements.

1. A member of the child's extended family;
2. A foster home licensed, approved, or specified by the Indian child's tribe
3. An Indian foster home licensed or approved by an authorized non Indian licensing authority or
4. An institution for children approved by an Indian tribe or operated by an Indian organization that has a program suitable to meet the Indian child's needs.

In Alaska, tribes have the option of signing the State Tribal agreement and may, under this agreement, change the order of preference for placements of their children as well as exercise other options. If you have a child from a Native family in your home and you are not Native, you are asked to keep the child connected with his Native heritage in whatever way you can.

The Indian Child Welfare Act does not apply to delinquent youth in placement.

Foster Parent Grievance Procedure

If you have a complaint or if you feel an injustice or a practice harmful to a child in your care has been done, you have several options available to you.

Your first course of action should always be to address your concerns directly to the party involved (for example the placement worker or licensing worker). When foster parents and DFYS workers try to work as a team, they often are able to resolve conflicts and disagreements in a way that is in the best interest of the child. Many complaints and difficulties can be resolved informally if foster parents and social workers communicate with each other.

If these actions do not seem to resolve the difficulty and you feel that additional action needs to be taken, you may wish to contact the employee's supervisor and explain your concerns.

If you wish to put your concerns in writing, DFYS has a complaint form (Form 06-9538) that you may use to file a complaint. Be sure to include the names of all persons involved, the dates when the events happened, what actions you have already taken and what remedy you expect. Submit this to the supervisor of the person whose actions you are grieving or to the Family Services/Youth Corrections regional managers if the person is directly supervised by the Family Services/Youth Corrections regional managers. Always keep a copy of this kind of correspondence for your own files.

13. Foster Care Resources

Directory of Regional Offices ✯ *Map of DFYS Offices* ✯ ***Foster Care Resources*** ✯ *National Foster Parent Association* ✯ *Alaska Foster Parent Training Center* ✯ *Anchor Foster Care Association* ✯ ***Other Statewide Resources*** ✯ *Healthy Alaskans Information Line* ✯ *PARENTS, Inc.* ✯ *Alaska Council on Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*

Directory of Regional Offices

The Division of Family and Youth Services has one state office in Juneau and three regional offices that serve the Northern, Southcentral, and Southeastern Regions. On the next page is a map of the DFYS offices and Youth Correctional Facilities throughout the state. Below are the addresses and phone numbers of the DFYS state office and the three regional DFYS offices.

DFYS STATE OFFICE:
Division of Family and Youth Services
Department of Health and Social Services
350 Main Street, Fourth Floor
P.O. Box 110630
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0630
(907) 465-3170

REGIONAL DFYS OFFICES:
Northern Regional Office
751 Richardson Hwy. Suite 300
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
(907) 451-2650

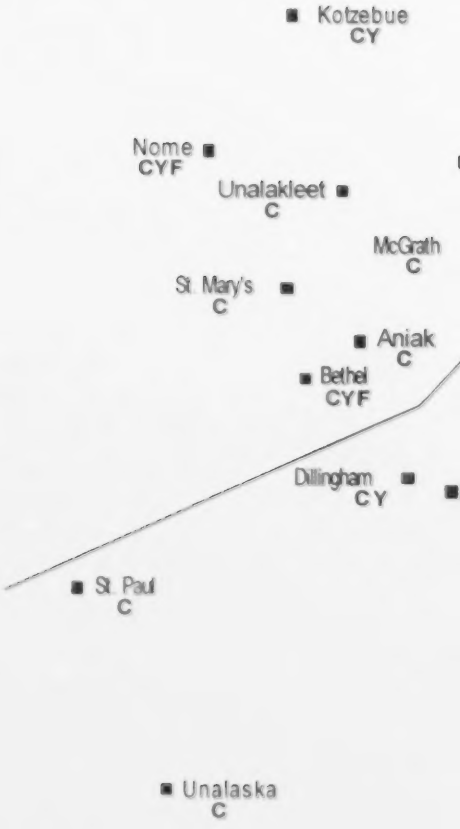
Southcentral Regional Office
550 W. Eighth Avenue, Suite 304
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
(907) 269-3900

Southeastern Regional Office
3025 Clinton Drive, Suite 200
Juneau, Alaska 99801
(907) 465-1650

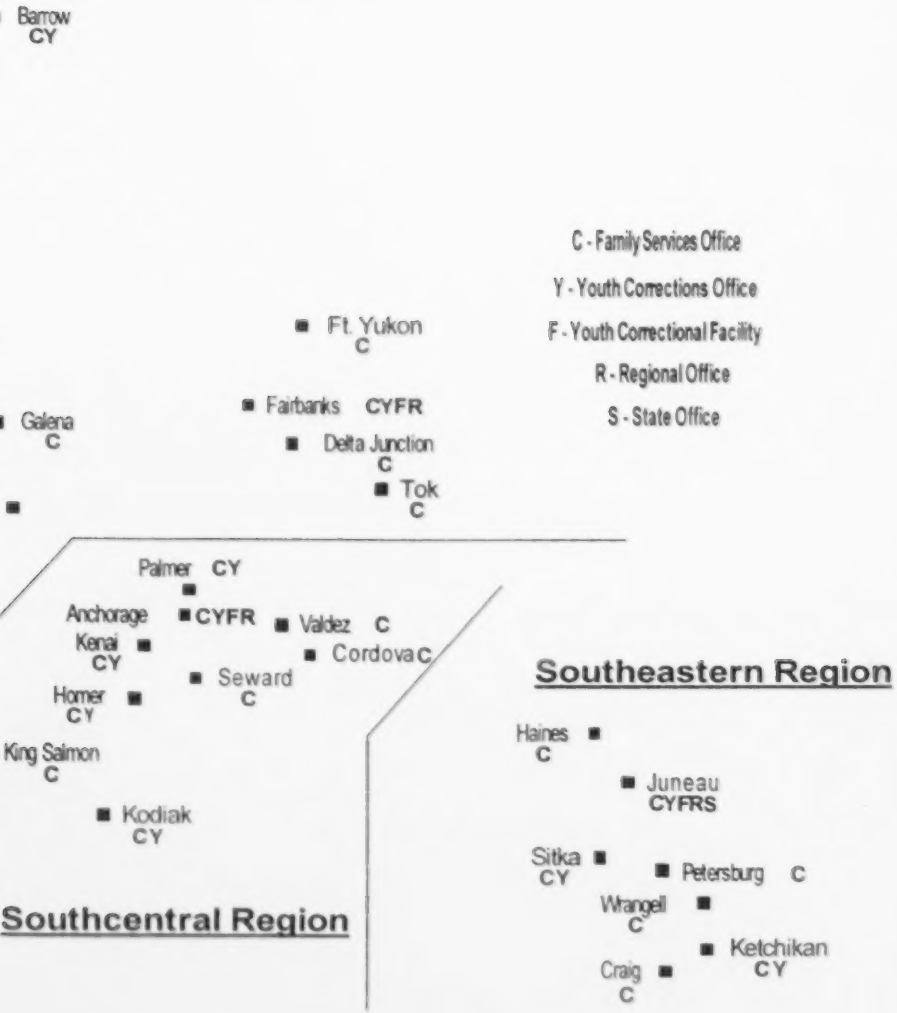
You may also learn more information about DFYS offices through the Internet, including the location of the DFYS office nearest you. Visit the Web Site at **www.hss.state.ak.us/dfys/index/html**

Department of Healt
Division of Family and

Northern Region



h and Social Services
Youth Services Offices



Foster Care Resources:

National Foster Parent Association

Address: Information and Services Office
9 Dartmoor Drive
Crystal Lake, IL 60014

Phone: 1 (800) 557-5238

The National Foster Parent Association brings together foster parents, agency representatives and child advocates into a coalition for foster children and foster families. The intent is to promote mutual coordination and communication among all parties in the system; to improve foster care services; to enhance and assist in the recruitment of new foster families; to encourage training and education for foster parents; and to inform the membership of current information pertaining to children needing foster care services.

The National Foster Parent Association sponsors a conference every year in May. Each year the conference offers intensive training with workshops on the topics most needed by foster parents and workers. Membership allows reduced registration fees for the conference and entitles member to receive the quarterly magazine, *The National Advocate*.

The Alaska Foster Parent Training Center

Phone: 1-800-478-7307, (907) 479-7307

Web-Site: www.mosquitonet.com/~afptc.

The Alaska Foster Parent Training Center (AFPTC) is operated by Northwest Resource Associates under contract with the Division of Family and Youth Services. AFPTC is responsible for conducting statewide foster parent training and support, and maintaining a lending library. The main office is located in Fairbanks at 3437 Airport Way, Suite 202, Fairbanks Alaska 99709 (907) 479-7307. Additional AFPTC offices are located in Anchorage at 880 H Street #103, (907) 279-1799 and in Juneau at 3036 Vintage Boulevard, Juneau, AK 99801 (907) 790-4246.

Anchor Foster Care Association

Address: Anchor Foster Care Association
P.O. Box 211245
Anchorage, Alaska 99521-0124.

The Anchor Foster Care Association is the foster parent group operating in the Anchorage, Eagle River and Chugiak areas. Anchor is a great resource for those foster parents living in the Anchorage bowl or a good information source for other areas of the state interested in beginning their own foster parent associations.

Other Statewide Resources:

Healthy Alaskans Information Line

Phone: 1-800-478-2221

The State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services sponsors a toll free number to call when looking for resources throughout the state regarding health, counseling, social services, treatment programs, recreation programs and education services. A computer database is kept containing resources throughout the state.

P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.

Phone: 563-2246 or 1-800-478-7678

Web Site: www.alaska.net/~parents

PARENTS, Inc. is a statewide agency that works with parents and foster parents with children with special needs. They offer information and referrals, training and supports, and educational resources. They run workshops and offer assistance in the area of IEP and Special education plans and sponsors Pathways, a statewide conference for parents and professionals featuring a variety of workshops and nationally known speakers. If you have a child with a disability and want information on resources or educational materials, PARENTS, Inc. is an excellent resource.

Alaska Council On The Prevention Of Drug & Alcohol Abuse

Phone: 258-6021 or 1-800-478-7738

e-mail: prevent@alaska.net

The Alaska Council is a statewide resource for information, books, videos and articles concerning drug and alcohol abuse, tobacco use, inhalants, fetal alcohol syndrome and teaching refusal skills to children through parents materials and school curriculum. The Council runs a lending library of materials that might be of great interest to foster parents.

Glossary Of Commonly Used Terms In The Handbook

A & I: Authorization and Invoice form

A.F.P.T.C.: Alaska Foster Parent Training Center

Caseplan: the written plan of care and treatment for a child in the custody of DFYS. Includes the Foster Care Plan and Agreement.

Child: a person under 18 years of age

Child abuse or neglect: the physical injury or neglect, mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a person under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened

Child in care: a child who is not a relative of the caregiver unless in a relative foster home

Child placement agency: an agency that arranges for the placement of children with adoptive or foster families.

Continuity: keeping children connected to their families, culture and community. It also means preventing gaps in the child's history that are caused by living in several different homes.

Corporal Punishment: the infliction of bodily pain as a penalty for a disapproved behavior; it includes shaking, spanking, delivering a blow with a part of the body or an object, slapping, punching, pulling or any other action that seek to induce pain. Corporal punishment is prohibited with foster children.

The division, DFYS: refers to the Division of Family and Youth Services

DHSS: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

Family Centered Services: a method of service delivery that focuses on family. Culturally appropriate, community based resource are used to protect an/or rehabilitate children, protect dependent adults, strength families, promote permanency and reduce the incidence or duration of out of home placement.

Foster Care Plan and Agreement: the plan of care for a child while in a foster home. The written plan includes information about the reason for placement, goals for placement, expected dates of duration or placement, medical information, education information and specifics about visitation. Is part of the overall caseplan for the child.

Foster home: a place where the adult head of household provides 24 hour care on a continuing basis to one or more children who are apart from their parents

Foster group home: a foster home in which one or more foster parents operate not more than one group home for no more than eight children

Foster parent: the person or persons providing foster care for children and includes a shelter home parent.

Guardian Ad Litem: a guardian ad litem (GAL) is appointed by the court to represent the best interest of the child and make recommendations to the court. A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a volunteer position under the supervision of a guardian ad litem that fulfills this role by visiting with the child, reviewing records, talking with foster parents and placement workers

Immediately: as soon as is reasonable possible and no later than 24 hours

I.C.W.A., Indian Child Welfare Act: a federal law passed in 1978 to protect Native families and communities by requiring states and child welfare departments to follow a specified preference when placing Native children in out of home care and notifying tribes when members and families are involved

Licensing worker: means an employee of the division or an individual or organization responsible for evaluating a facility and presumes review and approval of the representative's decision by the division or organization

Neglect: failure by a person responsible for the child's welfare to provide necessary food, care, shelter, clothing and medical attention for a child.

Out-of-home: care provided by a foster home, foster group home or residential care facility when a child is removed from his birth parent's home

Permanency Planning: caseplan for a child who is unable to be reunited with his birth family.

Placement: arranging for and supporting a child in a foster care or residential setting.

Placement worker: means an employee or volunteer of a child placement agency who arranges for placement of a child in a residential child care facility or a child foster home' placement worker include an employee of DFYS with regard to the placement of children.

Relative: an individual who is related to another through any of the following relationships, by blood, adoption, or marriage; parent, grandparent, great grandparent, brother, sister, stepparent, step-sister, step-brother, cousin, aunt, uncle, great aunt, great uncle or step-grandparent

Residential Child Care Facility: a place staffed by employees, where 1 or more children who are apart from their parents receive 24 hours care on a continuing basis.

Variance: a waiver from a licensing requirement or regulation that is approved in writing by the division

Young Child: a child age birth up to age 9

INDEX

A.....Alaska Foster Parent Training Center, 63
Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend, 24
Augmented rates, 22
Authorization and Invoice Form, 25
B.....Baby Walkers, 32
Baby-sitting and Child Care, 10
Behavior Management, 37
Birth Families, 40-43
C.....Car Seats and Seat Belts, 32
Caseplan, 55
Caseplanning/Legal Considerations, 55
Child Abuse Allegations, 49
Child Development, 36
Childproofing, 32
Citizens Foster Care Review Board, 56
Closing Your Foster Home, 48
Clothing, 11
Complaints Regarding Foster Homes, 49
Confidentiality, 56
Consent for Emergency & Routine Medical Care, 6, 29
Criminal Activity, 18
Cultural Identity, 41
D..... Damages and Loss, 23
Danger Signals, 16
Daily Living, 10
Death of a Foster Child, 19
Division of Family and Youth Services, 2
DFYS Offices, 61
Discipline, 37
Driving , 11
E.....Emancipation/Independent Living, 59
Emergencies And Changes In Your Home, 17
Emergency Shelter Foster Group Homes, 54
Employment, 11
F.....Family Centered Policy,40
Financial Matters, 21
Firesafety, Fire Drills, 33
First Aid, 33
Food, 12
Foster Care License, 45
Foster Care Payment System, 21
Foster Care Plan and Agreement, 6
Foster Group Homes, 52
Foster Care Resources, 61
G..... **Glossary of Terms, 65**
Grievance Process, 60
Guardians Ad Litem, 56
Guns and Firearms, 33
H..... **Health And Safety, 32**
Healthy Alaskans Information Line, 64
HIV/AIDS Testing, 31
I..... Immunizations, 30
Income Tax, 24
Indian Child Welfare Act, 59
Internal Case Reviews, 55
Introduction to Foster Parenting, *1*
L..... Legal Guardianship, 58
Liability Insurance, 24
Licensing, 45
Licensing Records, 47
Licensing Violations, 49
Lifebooks, 43
M..... Mail, 12
Medicaid Eligibility, 30
Medical Care, 29
Medical Records, 31
Medications, 31
Moving, 20
N..... National Foster Parent Association, 63
Nondiscrimination, 57
Notification of Changes in Foster Home, 19
P..... Parental Consent, 29,41
PARENTS, Inc., 64
Payment Rates, 21
Permanency Planning, 57
Permanent Foster Care, 58
Personal Property and Privacy, 12
Pets and Animals, 33
Placement Agencies, 4,53
Placement Packet, 6
Positive Parenting, 36
Post-Placement Visits, 9
Pregnancy of Foster Child, 18
Pre-Placement Visits, 6
Q..... Questions to Ask At Placement, 5
R..... Recordkeeping 47
Relative Foster Care, 43
Religion, 13
Removal of child from your home, 8
Reporting Child Abuse, 57
Requesting a child be moved, 8
Returning child to his birth family, 8-9
Risk Activities, 34
Runaways, 18, 22
S..... Savings Accounts and Allowances, 13
Saying Goodbye to Your Foster Child, 9
School, 13
Self Monitoring Report, 47
Separation and Loss, 7
Serious Illness, 18
Sex Education, 14
Sleep, 14
Sleeping Babies, 34
Smoking, 34
Social Activities,14
Specializations, 51
Specialized Foster Care Agreements, 53
Stand-By Homes, 53
Supervision, 34
T.....Training, 47
Transportation, 14
Treatment Foster Homes, 54
Television/Videos, 14
U..... Universal Precautions, 35
Use of Child's Legal Name, 15
V.....Vacations, 15
Variances, 46
Visitations, 42
W.....**When A Child Arrives, When A Child Leaves, 5**
Water Safety, 35